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LETTERS AND DIARY OF
LIEUTENANT G. E. S. SALT



Photo Cassano

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George. P. S. Sallé -

LETTERS AND DIARY OF
LIEUTENANT G. E. S. SALT
DURING THE WAR IN
SOUTH AFRICA, 1899-1900

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PREFACE

GEORGE EDMUND STEVENSON SALT, the third son of Sir Thomas Salt, first Baronet of Standon and Weeping Cross, County Stafford, was born at Weeping Cross, a mile or two from the town of Stafford, on 19th February 1873. He was educated at Charterhouse and New College, Oxford; and, entering the Army through the Militia, was gazetted to the 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers, as a 2nd Lieutenant, on 7th December 1895, and obtained his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant on 2nd March 1898. He was quartered with his regiment in India and at Aden, and while serving at the latter place he went on a shooting expedition to Somaliland in 1897, where, amongst other game, he shot a lion and two lionesses. On his regiment returning to England, he was quartered at Devonport, and

afterwards in South Wales. Thence he proceeded with his regiment to South Africa in 1899 after war was declared with the Boers, and took part in the relief of Ladysmith. The following extracts from his Letters and Diary give a full and clear account of what followed. Private matter has been cut out, and a few corrections made in dates and clerical errors, but otherwise the account is given word for word as he wrote it at the time. It is only necessary to add that he died of enteric fever at Modderspruit on 3rd April 1900, and that he lies buried there. After his death the following mention of his name appeared in despatches:—
“Lieutenant G. E. S. Salt, 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers, showed conspicuous gallantry on the 24th February, in bringing the machine gun into action by hand under great difficulties. He remained in action until the foresight was shot away, and the gun rendered useless.”

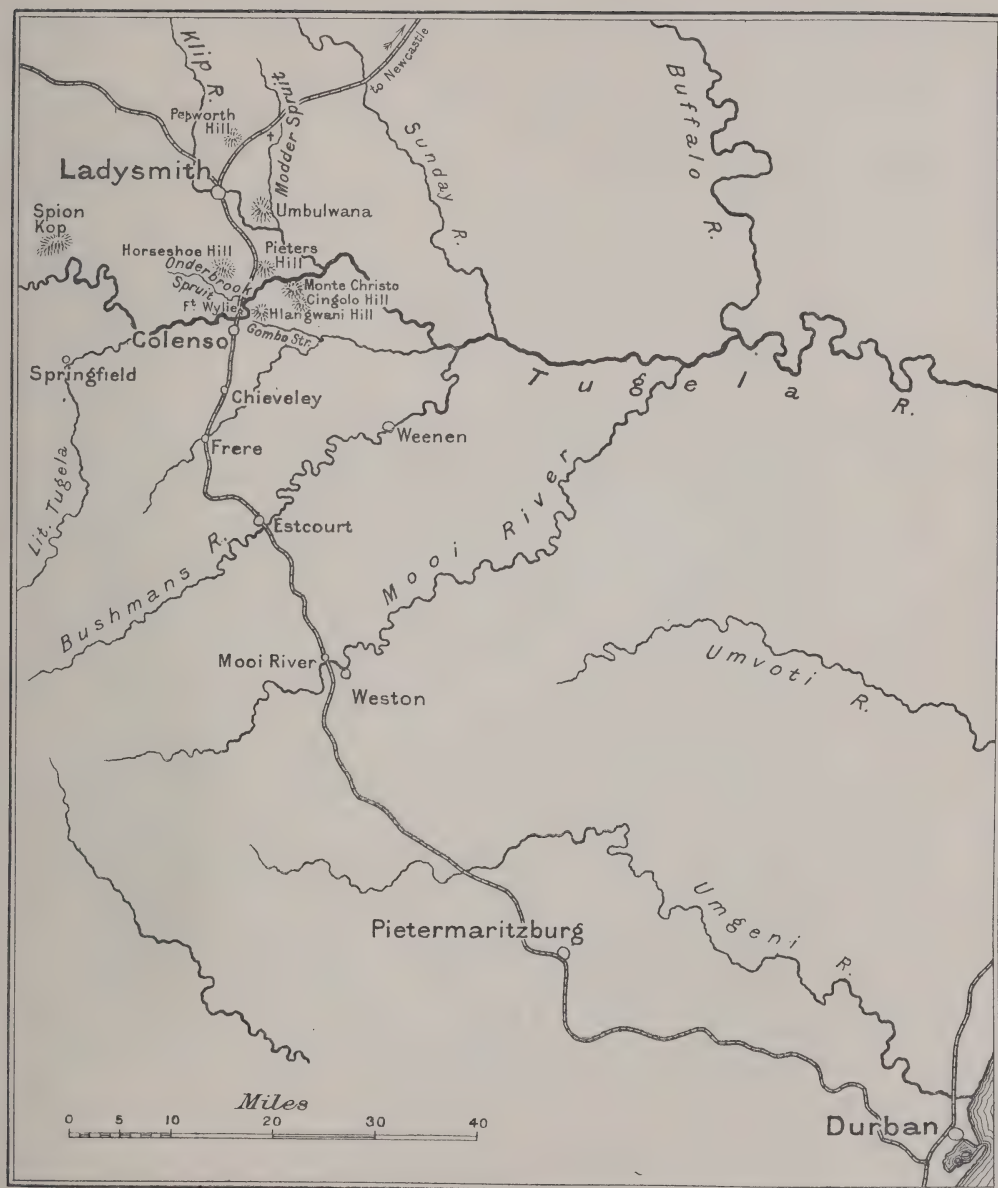
THOMAS A. SALT,

Captain, 11th Hussars.

31st October 1902.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<p> PORTRAIT OF LIEUT. G. E. S. SALT <i>From a Photograph by Bassano.</i> </p>	<p><i>Frontispiece</i></p>
<p> MAP OF NATAL </p>	<p><i>To face page viii.</i></p>
<p> THE GRAVE OF LIEUT. G. E. S. SALT, AT MODDER- SPRUIT, SHOWING THE ORIGINAL TEMPORARY WOODEN CROSS, SINCE REPLACED BY A CROSS OF WHITE MARBLE </p>	<p> „ 118 </p>



LIEUTENANT G. E. S. SALT

DIARY.—On Sunday, 8th October, orders were Oct. 8, 1899.
received at Headquarters to mobilize, in order
that the regiment might proceed to South Africa.
The reserves of A, B, and C Class were called out,
and were given until the 17th inst. to rejoin. We
required altogether 476 to bring us up to strength.
The first few days they were very slow in coming
in—numbers were said to be lounging about
Wrexham drinking. By the end of the week we
had not received more than 120 at Headquarters.
I was employed each day in taking a party of
them to Penally, and putting them through a short
course of musketry. They shot remarkably badly,
owing, I think, chiefly to having been on the booze.
On Tuesday, the 17th, a party of 70 arrived from Oct. 17, 1899.
the Dépôt, and on the following day 302 were

brought down in a special train. They had rejoined very well, for we now had all we wanted, and a large number had been spun medically, among them being Morris, my old servant. There were still 45 reservists at the Dépôt, who volunteered to join the Shropshires if we could not take them. Permission was obtained for them to come with us, and they joined us on Friday, the 20th. Everything went smoothly in barracks, though there was a great deal of work to be done, fitting men with clothing, equipment, etc.

LETTER.—*Pembroke Dock, 22nd October.* We leave to-night, and go by train to Southampton, arriving there about 9.30 to-morrow. We embark in the *Oriental*, a hired transport—a P. & O.—and are due to sail 2 o'clock in the afternoon. My next letter will probably be posted at Madeira. There was a big fight in the Transvaal, as you will have seen in the papers, and a very large percentage of officers killed and wounded. They are devils at picking off the officers. We leave here 1110 strong. We had a bad accident in barracks this morning, which deprived us of two men. Some wretched little drummer-boys got hold of a round of ammunition, and put it in a rifle and shot it off. The

bullet went through the wall of one of the huts, and hit two men who were inside, one man in the stomach, and the second in the arm. General Barton is our Brigadier, and Gatacre our General.

DIARY.—On Sunday, the 22nd, we finished Oct. 22, 1899.
our packing, closed all accounts, etc., and left Pembroke Dock at night by two special trains. The first, with the Colonel,¹ Braithwaite, A, B, E, Companies, band and details on board, left at 9.30. The remainder of us entrained about 11.30. There were numbers of people to see us off, in spite of its being so late. Pembroke also said good-bye as we passed through the station. Tenby Station, which we passed at 12.20, was illuminated, and crowded with people, who were most enthusiastic. We reached Landore at 3.15, and, even at that hour, there were several hundred people who had seen the first train go through, and waited to wish us good luck. We stopped there about a quarter of an hour. We reached Southampton at 9.30 A.M., Oct. 23, 1899.
fell in in quarter-column, close by the ship, then company by company, arms, and valises, were stored on board, front rank taking the arms, and

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel C. C. H. Thorold.

rear rank, the valises. As each company completed this, they fell in again, were told off to messes, and went on board ship. We were all aboard by 11.30. The *Oriental*, hired from the P. & O., is a good ship for comfort. There is plenty of deck room for the men and ample accommodation for officers. We have on board four officers of the 21st, Captain Northey, Lieutenants Paton (who was at Hythe with me last year), Jackson, and Rumbold. They have about 150 men with them. General Barton, our Brigadier, is also going out with us, and his staff—Captain M'Mahon, 7th Fusiliers, brother to the one in our other battalion, and Captain MacBean, Dublin Fusiliers. We came on board 1074 men strong. Two young fellows joined us on board, who were gazetted to us on Wednesday last. It is great luck for them, but it seems rather absurd to take them on service, as they know practically nothing.

LETTER.—SS. *Oriental*, 27th October. I am starting to write to you a few days before we get to St Vincent (Cape Verde Islands), as I shall have a number of letters to write, and nothing startling is likely to happen in the next few days. If so, I

can add it afterwards. My last letter was, I think, from Pembroke Dock. We left there about 12 o'clock on the Sunday night. One train-load went earlier. I was acting Adjutant to the second train. We had very nearly 700 men with us, and only just managed to get them into the train. A few had to travel first- and second-class, and one of the luggage vans was full of them. I think, on the whole, they were the best off, as they had room to lie down. The others travelled eight in a carriage, which is a pretty close fit, as they had all their luggage with them. It certainly is not very extensive, consisting only of a sea kit-bag and a valise. The former is a white bag, which, when packed, looks just like a large pillow. The following are roughly the clothes they take with them, besides what they have on:—Two suits of kharki; one flannel shirt; one pair of boots; two pairs of socks; a hold-all, containing spoon, fork, knife, razor, button-stick, and a few cleaning traps. We arrived at Southampton about 9.30, and at once started embarking. Men, baggage, and all were aboard by 11.30, but we had to wait for other details coming from London. There were a great many old officers to see us off. It really is rather an imposing sight as one leaves the quay, and must be very sad for people who have relations going off, especially when they are going for active service, for the dangers, of course, seem exaggerated. We were not fortunate in the start, for we had to lay-to

after about an hour, on account of the fog, and did not get well away until the next morning.¹ On board there are, ourselves, 1100 strong exactly, counting the officers, who number 26. Then there are about 150 of the 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, with 5 officers, a few medical staff, etc., numbering perhaps about 30. The Brigadier and two staff officers complete the list. His name is General Barton. We are in the 6th Brigade of the 3rd Division. It is a Fusilier Brigade, consisting of 2nd battalion 7th Royal Fusiliers, 2nd battalion 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, 1st battalion 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers, and 2nd battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers. I am sure there will not be a finer regiment there than ourselves,—a fine set of men and a very strong regiment. We have been very lucky in the weather. It has been beautiful all the time. We are rolling a little bit to-day, but nothing to mind. She is a good ship, though I daresay you would not think much of her in comparison to the Atlantic liners. We give the men as much exercise as is possible on board ship, having daily parades for physical drill and doubling round the deck. There is any amount of cabin accommodation for us, some having a cabin to themselves, others sharing them with one another. A good many fellows have been inoculated against enteric, which lays them up for

¹ A letter, dated ss. *Oriental*, 23rd October 1899, says : "We got off about 3.30, and, an hour afterwards, ran into a thick fog ; so we dropped an anchor, and are now lying still, ringing a two-minute bell."

a day or two. I have not, as it is a healthy climate we are going to, and they say it is not much good unless you are inoculated twice.

Sunday, 29th October.—Yesterday we passed the Oct. 28, 1899. Canary Islands, about two miles away. They rise very abruptly from the sea, to the height of several thousand feet. Unfortunately, the mountain tops were hidden behind clouds, and there was a mist over the whole Island, otherwise it would have been a fine view. We are to disembark at East London, and the probabilities are that we shall march through the Orange Free State. I am sending you a map of the country, which you may like to have, so that you can follow our movements when I write and mention names. We are getting into a warm climate now, and have begun to wear kharki uniform to-day. We are about 18° W. longitude and 27° N. latitude.

LETTER.—SS. *Oriental, 30th October.* We expect to get to St Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands early to-morrow morning, where we ought to get news of the war. We are getting into hot climates now, and we are wearing kharki, sleeping on deck, and dining under punkahs. It seems ages since we left England. I spend most of the

day reading and playing chess. "Richard Carvel," by Winston Churchill, is a good book.

DIARY.—1st *November*. The voyage, so far, has been very pleasant. We have had no rough or wet weather. There are physical drill and doubling parades every day—rifle shooting for men, and revolver practice for officers—so that we find plenty to do. I have classes of non-commissioned officers, rejoined from the reserve, for control of fire. We have been running between 320 and 360 miles a day. We slackened down a bit on Sunday
Oct. 31, 1899. and Monday, so as to arrive at St Vincent at day-break on Tuesday. When we got into the harbour we found the *Aurania*, with the 71st Highland Light Infantry, two companies Engineers, and two companies Mounted Infantry; and the *Pavonia*, with the 7th Fusiliers and 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers: also H.M.S. *Diadem*. The *Mongolian*, with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders on board, came in shortly after us; but, having enough coal on board to take her to the Cape, she left after about half an hour. We received news of the Gordon Highlanders suffering severe loss, all the officers, except three, of the half battalion engaged,

being killed or wounded ; and also of one squadron of 18th Hussars being captured. I went on shore after breakfast with Kington, Powell, and Stebbing. We watched a cricket match for a short time, walked about the town, which is clean but very uninteresting, and ended up at the Eastern Telegraph Company, where they gave us drinks and the latest news. It was not good news, for an official wire had just come through, telling of the capture of the Gloucester Regiment and Irish Fusiliers and a Mountain Battery, numbering altogether about 2000 men and 43 officers. We afterwards went on board the *Aurania* for lunch, and saw all friends in the Highland Light Infantry. Major Kelham is commanding them. We left the *Aurania* about 3 o'clock. Our boat had gone, so we had to come across in a small boat, which was rather overladen with the four of us sitting in the stern. There was a bit of wind blowing, and it was quite choppy. We got wet through. When we reached our ship, we had some difficulty in getting on board, and very nearly upset in our endeavours. The coaling was still going on, and the ship in a filthy mess. The *Aurania* left harbour about

5 o'clock. We finished coaling about 7.30, and weighed anchor at 8.30, leaving the *Pavonia* still coaling. It is a very bad coaling station. The *Diadem* sent 150 men to coal the *Aurania*, as the niggers struck work. We had a fatigue party of our own men for our job, and got through very well.

LETTER.—ss. *Oriental*, 11th November. We have had bad weather the last two days, and we are pitching a good deal now. It has upset a good many fellows, but I am thankful to say that I do not feel it in the least. We had a very poor run in consequence yesterday, only 245 miles. We have not had a single good run since we left St Vincent, on account of currents and the south-east trade winds—350 has been our best. We expect to get into Cape Town to-morrow night.

DIARY.—After leaving St Vincent, we were out of sight of land for nearly a fortnight until reaching Cape Town on 14th. It was a dull voyage, and we had several rough days, which upset a good many people. Kington and I went ashore together at Cape Town—Douglas¹ was on duty, so could not come with us. There are some fine buildings in the

¹ Lieutenant Douglas Powell, Royal Welch Fusiliers.

town, and some good shops, but the prices of everything are very high. We dined together at the Theatre Restaurant.

LETTER.—ss. *Oriental*, 15th November.—We got to Cape Town on Monday last, 13th, and left again yesterday. Our original orders were to land at East London, and we were then to join the 3rd Division, and march through the Free State; but plans have been altered on account of Sir G. White's position, and we are now going on to Durban to join the 2nd Division, under General Clery. We are, I believe, going to march on Colenso, take it, if occupied, and so open Sir G. White's line to Durban. I expect we shall stay sometime up there, and eventually come back to East London, and march with Gatacre's Division through the Free State. But, of course, we cannot tell that for certain yet. I think we ought to get some fighting in the next fortnight, as the Boers, from all accounts, are very strong round Ladysmith. It is extraordinary how little is known at Cape Town. Everything there is kept as dark as possible, as the place is full of spies. A good many troops have gone up to De Aar to guard the railway. They will eventually advance by Kimberley and Mafeking, I expect, and threaten the Boers in rear. I have charge of our maxim gun, but I don't know how much I shall be with it in action. If they brigade

maxims, I shall try and go in charge of ours. We had two or three rough days before we got to the Cape, but it is beautiful weather again now—quite cool. We have only worn kharki four or five days since we started. I expect we shall be one of the strongest regiments out here. We embarked 1101, counting officers. We shall probably be a good many fewer when we return home, for the losses are pretty heavy.

LETTER.—*Mooi River, 20th November.* The original plan when we left England was for our Division to concentrate at East London and march through the Free State, *viâ* Bethulie Bridge, over the Orange River; but, owing to Sir G. White being shut up in Ladysmith, it became necessary to send a force to assist him, and our Brigade was ordered to join the 2nd Division under General Clery. Accordingly, we continued our voyage from Cape Town to Durban, arriving there early on Nov. 17, 1899. Friday last, but had to wait until 2 30. P.M. to get into the harbour. There we met with a great reception from the inhabitants of Durban, and when the men were disembarked on the quay, hundreds of loaves, buns, bananas, and packets of cigarettes were thrown to them. They were standing at ease there, while the arms were being unloaded from the ship; so it was rather an amusing scene. Four trains were provided for us, but very few covered coaches. Most of the men had to travel in open goods trucks,

which had been provided with wooden benches, but they were so packed,—sixty in an eight-wheel truck—that I think they felt the discomfort more than the cold during the night. I was employed in picking our mobilization stores, tents, blankets, etc., so that I did not get off till the last train at 8. For two or three miles the line was crowded with people, cheering and running along by the side of the train, handing in cigarettes to the men, and also notes from Lucy this and Mary that, wishing them good luck and safe return. We got to Maritzburg¹ about 1 o'clock, and some coffee and bread was provided for the men there. We also had to drop our heavy baggage there, and our party of 93 men for the base, under an officer.² Rather hard luck on him! The railway is remarkable. We pass through mountainous or hilly country all the way, but there are no tunnels and very few embankments or cuttings. The consequence is steep gradients, short trains, and long journeys. It is quite extraordinary how the line curls in some places. My train reached its destination, Mooi River, about 6.30 A.M., and, as I had no men to look after, I got a wash and breakfast at the hotel here. You will be surprised to hear there is an hotel; but if you saw the place, you would be still more so, for there are only about four houses altogether. There is a station, an hotel, a store, station-master's house,

Nov. 18, 1899.

¹ Pietermaritzburg : often shortened thus.

² Lieutenant F. A. Stebbing, Royal Welch Fusiliers.

and one other, but there are farms in all the hills round, and I suppose they come down to the station to buy and sell cattle to a small extent. We started business very soon, for, while we were going to our camp, a report came in from the outposts that there was a body of the enemy a few miles away; so we had to sit under the brow of a hill for about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours, ready for any emergency. Eventually it proved to be only a herd of cattle. This sounds absurd, but you would not believe how difficult it is to distinguish objects, especially as it is known that the Boers are all mounted. Our tents, etc., which should have come on the last train with us, were taken off—I presume on account of the weight—so we had to bivouac that night. I had my valise with me, so was quite comfortable, Nov. 19, 1899. although it was very damp. Sunday passed without any excitement;¹ but, as our tents had not turned up, we had to bivouac again; but this time we were not so fortunate, for we had a heavy thunderstorm in the middle of the night. I had rigged up a sort of awning with my waterproof sheet. The rain drove under it right into my face, but I managed to keep most of my clothes fairly dry. The mosquitoes were troublesome, but I wrapped one of the silk handkerchiefs you sent me round my

¹ A letter, dated 21st November 1899, from Mooi River, says: "On Sunday we were in camp all day. Thorneycroft's Horse were out, and exchanged shots with the enemy. Two of the enemy were seen to fall, and on our side three were wounded."

head, and defeated them. Our baggage arrived late Sunday night, so that there was plenty to do pitching camp, etc. The next day I was up at the piquets most of the morning, taking ranges. Natives and farmers kept coming in, saying the Boers were looting cattle a few miles away. We have one company of Mounted Infantry here, but no Cavalry, so that we cannot do much to stop them. Just before dinner (6 P.M.) we saw a fairly large body of the enemy on the opposite side of the valley, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. There is a railway bridge over the river¹ here, which they want to destroy, so we have to keep a pretty sharp look-out. At 7 P.M. we were ordered to get under arms, and some companies were sent off to strengthen the piquets, which are on the line we should have to hold. We remained under arms till 9.45. P.M., then had orders to sleep with our arms by our sides, ready to fall in at a moment's notice; and, if not called before, to get under arms at 3 A.M., to form a flying column. We fell in again about 3.15, but again had to sit tight and do nothing till daylight. At 6. A.M. we were dismissed,² but ordered to stay by our tents

Nov. 20, 1899.

Nov. 21, 1899.

¹ The Diary says: "The river averages about 20 to 25 yards in breadth, is fordable in several places, and, as far as I have seen, nowhere deeper than 7 feet."

² A letter says: "I don't like turning out and being disappointed. It is as bad as being put at a good corner of a covert, and getting no birds over you."

ready for anything that might turn up. The whole of my company are out on piquet now, but, as I have charge of the maxim gun, I do not go with them. Shortly after breakfast the General came along, and told us that two parties of the enemy were seen advancing towards the camp, so we are now standing by, ready to fall in. That we have not done so, you may judge from the length of this letter. I don't think we shall have a fight to-day, as we are too strong for the Boers to attack us; at the same time, we cannot attack them, as being mounted, they are much more mobile than we are. As so many officers have been killed, we have orders now to dress as much as possible like the men; our swords have been sent back to the base; we wear men's buff belts, haversacks, water-bottles, and pouches. Our arms consist of a revolver. I believe they have been trying to get carbines for us, but there are not enough surplus ones. We cannot tell our future plans. We shall, I suppose, move on to Estcourt in the course of the next fortnight, and so, on to Ladysmith; but it is reported that the enemy have blown up the bridge over the Tugela at Colenso; and, if so, that will probably hinder us considerably. Our force here now consists of 1 battery, Field Artillery; ¹ Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry Irish Fusiliers, Devons, 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers, 1 company Royal Scots Fusiliers, 2 companies

¹ Diary states it was armed with 15-pounders.

“Queen’s” West Surrey. We expect the Royal Fusiliers, and the remainder of the Royal Scots Fusiliers to arrive shortly. We have had to sleep in our clothes the last three nights, so I hope we shall have the chance of a good sleep to-night.

DIARY.—*21st November.* One of our piquets shot their own sentry last night,—a most annoying accident. I think night outposts should be strictly forbidden to fire, unless they are fired on first, actually rushed, or in the case of some one refusing to answer the challenge after it’s being repeated. Until men have had a lot of night duty, they are very liable to get jumpy and fire on anything they see, unless an officer is present to restrain them. In addition to this, it is exceedingly difficult here to distinguish between the enemy and our own Mounted Infantry, and also native English farmers. The only actual encounter there has been with the enemy here was on Sunday last, when Thorneycroft’s Mounted Infantry came across a party when scouting. Shots were exchanged. Two of the enemy were seen to fall. Three of the Mounted Infantry were wounded.

LETTER.—*Mooi River, 21st November.* The

mail has just come in, and I see by a cutting that there was an attempt to wreck our train on the way from Pembroke Dock to Southampton. I am in charge of the maxim gun,—rather an anxious job, as it is not an easy thing to work well, and one feels responsible if anything goes wrong. I have been loading cartridges into the belts most of the night, and have 3000 rounds ready now.¹

Nov. 22, 1899. *22nd November.*—This morning we were turned out at 2.30, but did not do anything. I was out at No. 3 Piquet, on a hill we have named Fusilier Hill, all the morning, taking ranges. The captain in charge of the piquet had a good telescope, and I spent about one hour watching the Boers, who were driving off cattle about five miles away. It seems an infernal shame that we cannot stop this, but we have no Cavalry, and only a small force of Mounted Infantry, and it is quite useless to follow them with infantry, as they are all mounted. I saw about 500 Boers. They had a large hospital tent, with a gun close beside it—a very dirty trick they play, as they know we shall not fire at anything showing the Red Cross. I got back to camp for lunch about 12.30, and afterwards went to lie down

¹ Another letter, written on 21st November, says : “I don’t think we are likely to get a night in bed to-night, for we have just heard that the Boers have occupied a village near the line, about three miles south of us. I wish they would take us out and let us have a go at them.”

for a sleep, about 2.15 P.M. I was woken up by some one telling me that the enemy were shelling our camp, and a moment after I heard a bang and the whizz of a shell coming. It passed over our heads, and burst beyond the camp. The next one burst rather shorter. By this time the "fall in" had gone, and our fellows turned out splendidly, everyone quite cool, though very few had ever been under fire before. The gunner camp is next to ours, and, just after the guns had moved off, I saw a couple of shells burst bang in their camp.¹ One struck the ground under the tail of a horse as a man was mounting—a very narrow squeak. Luckily, it was a played² shell, and did no harm. Two others struck close by our kitchens without doing any harm. After we had fallen in, we got under the crest of a hill, and the enemy's guns tried to shell the railway station. Two struck in a garden close by. They were firing at a range of 6800. Presently some of their infantry³ came in range of our guns, who picked up the range directly, and sent them flying. Then a thunderstorm and thick mist came over and put an end

¹ The Diary adds: "They fired shrapnel with percussion fuze, and the shells were quite harmless, as they did not burst. They had opened fire at a range of 6800 yards. Our guns could not fire time fuze shrapnel at that range, and they do not carry common shell nowadays, so they remained inactive behind the ridge."

² Written thus in a copy of the original letter. Probably intended for "plugged."

³ Mounted Infantry, according to the Diary.

to the affair. I never had a chance of getting my gun into action, but I hope for better luck next time. There was a certain amount of rifle shooting, but chiefly at long range, I think. Our side lost—one man killed and one man wounded in the Mounted Infantry, and one wounded in the Devons.

Nov. 23, 1899. LETTER.—*Estcourt, 29th November.* The following morning we turned out at daylight, but, before we were fallen in, again the shells arrived, all pitching into the camp. Some of our guns left camp and took up ranges close to the enemy's guns. I saw the whole thing splendidly from a ridge where I was sitting.¹ The enemy shot wonderfully well, every one of their shells pitching within 20 yards of the guns, but luckily nothing was hit. Our guns could not do much good, so they presently came back into camp. They passed 20 yards from where I was sitting, and rather below me. The enemy saw them as they came into camp, and fired three shells, each of which went straight over the guns, and pitched 30 yards beyond, one going smash into a tent. It was most amusing to see the men left in camp. Directly a shell struck, two or three of them would run to the place and start digging to get the case. Hardly any of their

¹ A letter written on sheets out of a note-book, and dated 23rd November, says: "Our camp is somewhat in a hollow, and we occupied the ridges all round."

shells burst, and in the two days no one was hurt by their guns.

LETTER.—*23rd November.*¹ It is rather an unpleasant feeling being shelled, for you first hear the bang, then you hear the whizz of the shell coming towards you, and have plenty of time to wonder whether it is going over one's head or not, and then perhaps you see it strike beyond you. At present our position is this: we cannot settle down in camp because the enemy start shelling it directly, so we have to remain out where there is cover from the fire, but none from the sun, and it is very hot. We have to send a few men into camp to bring out the meals. I suppose we shall go back into camp when it is dark, and turn out again as soon as it is light, an ignominious and uncomfortable position. How long this will go on for, or what we are to do, no one knows. We have no big guns up here, and no cavalry. I have not yet seen any one hit, though I have seen some of the shells go very close. We are expecting the 7th Fusiliers and the Scots Fusiliers this afternoon. Yesterday the enemy were shelling the station, so I expect they will have to detrain a bit down the line. We are having a lot of rain—a thunderstorm comes up every afternoon, and generally returns in the night. We got wet through yesterday, and it looks very much as if

¹ Written on sheets from a note-book, evidently while out on the ridges during the daytime, as mentioned in the letters.

the same thing would happen this evening. Estcourt, which is not far from us, has been cut off, and we cannot communicate with them.

DIARY.—We lay out in the open, and breakfasts were brought to the men. Nothing further of interest occurred. The enemy eventually withdrew their gun.¹ It was thought that they would try and take up a position on the hill by Elands Coppice, south-east of the camp, which would enable them to shell the ridge and the railway line south of us. Accordingly, a flying column was formed, consisting of ourselves, two guns, and one company of Mounted Infantry. We reached Piccinoni's Farm about 7 P.M. He is a large horse-breeder, and we all turned into two enormous riding schools he has. We intended to start at day-break and occupy the position. It was an awful night—heavy thunderstorms and torrents of rain. I was on piquet, so got no sleep, and my jersey and cloak had got wet through, coming over the ford with the maxim gun. So I spent rather a

¹ A letter says: "About 10 o'clock they stopped firing. We heard afterwards that one of our shells knocked their gun off the carriage, but without killing any one. We had to have dinners sitting outside the camp."

miserable night. However, it was not very long, for about 12.30 an order came from the General to Nov. 24, 1899. return to camp. We all felt rather disgusted, as we had hoped to have to turn the enemy out of the position. We had to return over the bridge at Weston, as the ford would have been almost impassable after the heavy rain. We got to camp about 5 o'clock. Every one was fairly tired out. We were out again in the afternoon, and the guns exchanged a few shots. Our guns sent a couple of shells among their transport. The Royal Fusiliers and Scots Fusiliers arrived from Durban, also four guns from the 66th Battery.

LETTER.—*Estcourt, 27th November 1899.* Our guns got rather caught in a trap that afternoon. Some of them saw a transport train going along a valley, so they galloped to a ridge not far from them, unlimbered, and started to fire. They then found all the Boer guns trained on them, so they limbered up and went off. A few moments later a party of about 500 Boers came round the hill close to where they had been. They would probably have been captured if they had not moved off quickly.

DIARY.—*27th November.* We got a good

night's sleep on Friday, and I think every one
Nov. 25, 1899. wanted it. On Saturday, a flying column was
formed. It consisted of the 66th Battery, 3
companies, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, the
Devons, and ourselves. We left camp about 3 P.M.,
and marched up to Laad's Kopje, the position
which the enemy had held.¹ We bivouacked there
for the night, and were very comfortable, but the
men had no tea provided for them, and, owing to
the dark, we were unable to get more water when
our water-cart was empty. Luckily, it was a fine
Nov. 26, 1899. night, and I slept very comfortably until 1 o'clock,
when Kington came with orders from the General
for us to get ready, as soon as possible, to march to
Estcourt. It was a very dark night, and there
were very few lanterns, so it was by no means an
easy job dressing and inspanning the oxen and

¹ A letter, dated 27th November, says: "We left camp about 3 P.M., and marched five miles up hill to the position the Boers had been in the day before. We hoped to find some still there, but our scouts, when they came to the crest, saw the tail of the enemy retiring. We occupied the position and bivouacked the night, praying for a fine night. A bivouac is just what one has always imagined. Each little party lights a fire and cooks whatever they have with them. I got a comfortable corner between some rocks, and slept like a top until 1 A.M., when I heard some one come and wake the Colonel, and give orders to get ready as soon as possible to march to Estcourt."

mules. Our orders were to take no carts at all with us, as they were all to return to camp. So we had to serve out another 100 rounds per man.¹ The column was ready by 3 A.M., and we marched off. The men had no tea or water before starting, which was rather hard, but could not be helped. It was daylight by 4.30. After crossing a couple of ridges, we had a long stretch of about 4 miles along the top of a ridge; but, after that, a great deal of up and down. We halted for a quarter of an hour about 6 A.M. by the side of a stream, where the men had a drink and some biscuits. There had been a certain amount of straggling, but after the halt the men went well again for some time; but they were heavily laden, and not in great marching condition. We halted again for a few minutes about 9, and then marched into Estcourt, reaching there about 9.45 A.M. It was a trying march—about 17 miles—and, on the whole, the men did well. General Barton wired to congratulate us in the afternoon. General Hildyard had marched out towards Frere Bridge just before we marched in.

¹ The men carried 200 rounds of ammunition each, including the 100 rounds here mentioned.

We found nothing but a dirty square of dry, hard sand between the station and the town to bivouac on, and there was hardly any shelter.¹ We did very little all the rest of the day. The railway station is the great meeting-place here, as there is a good dining-room. Denny, the Army Service Corps fellow from Newport, is here, and very kindly asked several of us to lunch and dine with him. General Hildyard had an engagement on Thursday, 23rd, which, from the accounts given here, does not appear to have been much of a success. They attacked at night and drove the enemy out of their position, but were attacked again in the morning, and obliged to retire, the West Yorks, who were unsupported, losing heavily. Eight dead and forty-five wounded were brought into camp. Fifteen were found missing, and a search was made the following day, when seven were brought in dead and eight wounded. I also heard the account of the armoured-train disaster. It appears that the Boers had trial shots at a certain part of the line, so as to get an accurate range. The train, on the day of

¹ A letter says : "Some of our baggage arrived in the evening, but no tents. I found a small bit of grass behind the hotel, and had my bed put down there."

the disaster, went out as usual, until, arriving at a certain place, they were fired on, whereupon they started home again. But the Boers had slightly raised the line at the spot on which they had ranged ; so that, directly the train ran off the line, the Boer guns opened fire on it, killing and wounding several men. Churchill, who appears to have kept his head better than any one else, got every one to work, got the engine on to the line again, put the dead and wounded in it, and started back with it ; but, after going a few hundred yards, he got out himself and went back to those who were left behind. They were all taken prisoners. The wounded on the engine arrived safely at Estcourt.

LETTER.—*Estcourt, 27th November 1899.* This is, I think, quite the most odious place I have been in. You must not think I am grumbling, for I really enjoy the discomfort of the thing. It is like a great open square where a fair has taken place ; closed in with barbed wire ; with cattle and ponies in one corner ; bundles of hay, potatoes, etc., lying about ; a tin shed or two ; a few tents ; the station on one side, and the village on the other. I think you can imagine it pretty well. Here one is turned out with 1000 men to spend the day and sleep the night. The men lie on the ground close

to their arms. A good many officers had their beds made down in a go-down. I found a grassy bit, and had mine in the open, which I far prefer as long as it is fine. I am afraid one is very unlikely to have any opportunity of distinguishing oneself in any way. I wish I could have an opportunity, though probably I should lose it.

Nov. 27, 1899. DIARY.—*27th November.* We heard to-day of the defeat of the Boers at Belmont. I hope that soon now the English flag will be hoisted at Bloemfontein. All the Boers here are hurrying northward. They destroyed the railway bridge at Colenso this morning. We heard a number of guns in the distance this morning, but have not heard what took place. During the afternoon we changed our camp and pitched our tents on a hillside across the railway. The Devons are alongside of us.

Nov. 29, 1899. LETTER. — *Estcourt, 29th November.* General Hildyard is now before Colenso. I hope we shall go there soon. The Boers hold a very strong position there, and I think we shall very likely have a big battle. We hear this evening of a very big fight which took place on the west yesterday. It is the third Lord Methuen has had. I hope my next letter will be from somewhere near Colenso. These

Boers have good guns, good rifles, and are no mean enemy.

LETTER.—*Escourt, 29th November.* I do not think we shall move forward very much until the column has marched well into the Free State. From what we hear here, it is quite possible that we shall have a big job at Pretoria, unless they give in before then. The victories on the west are good, but very expensive in life and limb. I do not expect we shall finish the war before Easter, unless the Boers find that they cannot keep their army together, and have to give in. They make wonderful practice with their guns, which are, I believe, worked almost entirely by Germans, but luckily their shells are no good, else we should have suffered a good deal at Mooi River.

LETTER.—*Estcourt, 30th November.* The position here at present is as follows:—Sir G. White at Ladysmith, quite capable, I think, of holding his own; General Hildyard at Frere, in touch with the Boers, who are holding a strong position near Colenso, defending the passage of the Tugela. The Boers that we have been engaging in the direction of Mooi River have all retreated northward, and are with the Colenso force. General Barton with the Fusilier Brigade is here (Estcourt), and troops who have come up lately are at Mooi River. Lord Methuen is relieving Kimberley. A

flying column is making for Mafeking, and General Gatacre is starting to march through the Free State *viâ* Bethulie. I expect that we shall shortly join General Hildyard at Frere, General Clery being in command of the Division. We shall try and force the passage of the Tugela and join Sir G. White. Other troops will come up here, where an advanced Depôt will be formed. We shall then probably wait until Lord Methuen and General Gatacre are threatening Bloemfontein, which will cause the Free State Boers to retire to protect their homes. Eventually, I suppose, they will advance towards Pretoria, and the Transvaal Boers will retire there; and we shall then advance and all forces concentrate at Pretoria. If they still hold out, I expect we shall have a big job to take Pretoria. We have been under shell fire, but not of a very serious nature. I hope we shall get to closer quarters before long.

DIARY.—*Estcourt, 4th December.* We have remained here all the week, which has been devoid of excitement. We have occasionally heard guns in the distance, and we are told that the enemy are holding a very strong position on the other side of the Tugela, covering Colenso. I do not think there are any Boers south of the Tugela now. Troops are coming up gradually, and we shall

shortly have an army of 20,000 before Colenso. The whole of our brigade is here; also one company Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry and two Field Batteries. Some of the Royal Dragoons arrived this morning. They have been some days at Maritzburg, and lost about 40 horses from Pink-eye. We heard a few days ago of Lord Methuen's big engagement on the Modder River. Our losses were heavy—63 killed and over 300 wounded, and it does not seem to have been a very decisive victory. Kington has been living at the hotel, and made the acquaintance of a Mrs Bensusan, wife of an officer in Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry. I often go down to tea there, and we have some music after. Wyndham, in the 60th, on General Barton's staff, comes and sings. He has a very good voice. Yesterday evening we had a very pleasant ride after tea. This morning we had a Brigade parade. Yesterday was very hot, but to-day it is cloudy, inclined to rain and quite cool. Webber and Rickman arrived during the week.

LETTER.—*Estcourt, 7th December.* The last week our work has been more that of Salisbury

Plain manœuvres than active service, and not at all to my fancy. There is no enemy within 20 miles of us, and so no excitement. We have a parade in the morning and in the afternoon. I generally bathe and have a ride when it gets cool. Being in charge of the maxim gun, I am allowed to ride, if I care to provide myself with a horse. I have bought a capital little pony,¹ dun-coloured, with zebra markings, and a black mark down his spine. I don't think I have ever been on a more comfortable pony to ride. It really makes a great deal of difference to one having an animal, for one can get out of camp in the evening into the country round, and see a good deal more of the country. Nearly the whole of Natal is pasture land, and there are very large herds of cattle and a good many horses. The farmers are chiefly English, and a very good class. The towns are very small, nothing much more than villages, but they have good stores, at which we can buy most things at a large price. As regards war news, there is not much to tell you this week. The positions are much the same as when last I wrote, except that we are massing more troops nearer the Tugela, opposite Colenso. General Hildyard is at Frere, with eight battalions Infantry, one regiment Cavalry ("Royals"), three companies Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, some Imperial Light Horse, 600 South African Horse, four batteries of Artillery, and some naval guns.

¹ The price of the pony was £27, according to another letter.

Every one is gradually moving up to Frere. We are to march there on Saturday—11 miles—and by then General Buller, who has just gone up there, will have a force of about 22,000 men. Next week possibly we shall have a big battle to force the passage of the Tugela at Colenso, and so open the way to Ladysmith. The army there numbers about 10,000, so we shall be a good strong army then to march into the Transvaal. Fine days here are very hot, but we get a good many cloudy days, which are cool and pleasant.

LETTER.—*Estcourt Camp, 7th December.* We Dec. 6, 1899. heard yesterday that the letters would come in by the evening train, so after dinner, which is a very early feast with us, as we try and get it through by day-light, “Barnum”¹ and I walked down to the station. Of course the train was late. I sat down on a box and went to sleep. The train did not come in till just upon 10 o’clock. The mail-bags were then taken to the Field Post-Office, which consists of a tent in the brigade lines. We followed them there, and by the light of one lamp assisted in the sorting, a huge pile of letters having been thrown out on to the ground. The farmers are very hospitable, and I have been into two different farms for tea. We expect to move on to Frere on Saturday, and, possibly, we shall have a

¹ The nickname of 2nd Lieutenant Bayly, Royal Welch Fusiliers.

big fight sometime next week at Colenso. It is very dull here, and I shall be glad to move. I bathe very often; twice a day in the Bushman's River. There is a very nice pool with a swift current. Hurt and I ride down there and tie our ponies up close by the bank. These country ponies stand wonderfully well. Yesterday evening I went into a farm-house for tea, and left my pony standing loose outside, with the rein thrown over his head. I was in there about half-an-hour, but he never moved.

LETTER.—*Estcourt, 7th December.* Ladysmith is quite safe. We are in signal communication with them now, and there is no anxiety concerning them. We expect a battle next week. I think very likely it will be the big engagement of the war, but it is difficult to say for certain. I hope my maxim-gun detachment will not be as unlucky as the Scots Guards' one. They were struck by a shell before coming into action, the officer was wounded, the sergeant killed, and the gun disabled. I do not think we shall finish the war till the end of February or March, unless we have the opportunity of giving them a crushing defeat. People are beginning to come back to these parts now; and, I hope, in three weeks' time, that there will be no Boers left in Natal.

DIARY.—*Frere Camp, 9th December.* There

has been no excitement of any sort since Monday.¹ The Irish Brigade and Light Infantry Brigade passed through Estcourt, and proceeded to Frere, part going by train and part marching. We have been having battalion parades in the morning, except one day, when we had a Brigade march. I have had my gun detachment out for instruction every day, and have spent the evenings bathing and riding. This morning the Brigade marched Dec. 9, 1899. here, a distance of about 11 miles. We struck camp at 4 A.M., and were past the bridge over the river before 5 A.M. It was hot when the sun got up, and a good many men fell out, more than need have done, I think. We got to our camping ground about 9.45. Sir Redvers Buller is here, and two divisions of infantry.²

LETTER.—*Frere Camp, 10th December 1899.* Yesterday our brigade struck camp about 4 A.M., and we marched over here, about 11 miles. It was very hot when the sun got up, and a good

¹ 4th December.—The last entry in the Diary before 9th December.

² A letter, dated 14th December, from Chieveley Camp says: "The army at Frere numbered over 20,000, and consisted of 16 battalions Infantry, 2 regiments British Cavalry, 5 batteries of Artillery, about 20 naval guns, Imperial Light Horse, South African Light Horse, Bethune's Mounted Infantry, and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry."

many men fell out. It seems absurd that they cannot all march 11 miles without feeling it, but they have to carry a good big load. Yesterday they carried great-coats rolled, containing everything they bring with them, 100 rounds of ammunition, rifle, full water-bottles, canteen, haversack, and some carry a spade as well. In addition to this, the sun, which is very hot, affects a good many of them. It makes one feel terribly slack in the middle of the day, unless there is a breeze. All this country is much the same, the only variety being in the height of the hills, most of which are flat-topped. It is a railway bridge which makes a place here of military importance—Mooi River, Estcourt and Frere all being held on account of the bridges over the river. The bridge here was blown up by the Boers about three weeks ago. It was a double-spanned iron bridge, and both spans are smashed and lying like this,



A A being broken iron girders, which originally ran along the dotted lines. A temporary wooden bridge has been built alongside, which the trains run over. There will be a big job repairing the bridge at Colenso over the Tugela, which the

enemy have blown up. On Friday last, there was a sortie from Ladysmith under Hunter, with 800 men. They captured two of the big Boer guns, a 6-inch and a 4.7, and blew them up. It must have been ripping, and a severe blow to the enemy. Some of our cavalry also got round their flank and gave them a bit of a dusting. It is reported in camp here that we are going to shell the Boer position with our guns for two days before the infantry attack. I shall manage somehow to go out and see the fun. That is one reason why I am delighted at having a pony, as it gives one a chance of seeing much more. It is too hot to move about much now, but I shall try and ride out about 2 miles this evening to a hill from which one can see the Boer camp. We are close to the Drakensberg mountains, and they looked splendid this morning, with the clouds quite low down on them. I went out early this morning to get a bathe, but it is not nearly such a good river as the Bushman at Estcourt.

DIARY.—*Frere, 10th December (Sunday).* This Dec. 10, 1899. morning we had Church parade at 7.40. After breakfast, I had a walk round the camp. In the afternoon I rode up with Kington and Cavendish, the Divisional Signalling Officer, to one of the piquets, from which we could see two or three

of the Boer camps.¹ We got connection with Cayzer at Weenen with the helio—he can signal into Ladysmith. I left them there and rode home, having a bathe on the way. I visited the place where the armoured train was wrecked. The trucks are still lying by the side of the railway. There is a grave close by, where the men of the Dublin Fusiliers and Durban Light Infantry, who fell there on 15th November, are buried. The enemy do not appear to have tampered with the line; but, having previously obtained the exact range from a hill close by, they wrecked the train with shell fire as it got to the bottom of a steep incline. We had a splendid plum pudding for dinner, one which “Joe” Powell’s² people had sent out to him.

Dec. 11, 1899. DIARY.—12th *December*. I had a bathe yesterday before breakfast, and, during the morning, took ranges for Radcliffe, who was making a sketch of the ground round the camp. In the

¹ A letter says: “Several of the enemy’s camps scattered over the hills above Colenso.”

² Lieutenant Douglas Powell, Royal Welch Fusiliers, nicknamed “Joe.”

evening, about 7.30, we had orders to get everything packed up, except the tents, and be ready for a night march. We slept as we were, were roused at 1 A.M., and left camp at 2. It Dec. 12, 1899. was a good night for a march, and we reached Chieveley Station¹ about 5. After a short halt we advanced again, and halted finally about a mile or so down the line. I was sent out on piquet with my company to occupy a hill about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away on the right flank. We had a pretty stiff job there, building a stone sangar.² Radcliffe, who had come on later with the waggons, turned up about 12.45 with lunch, and we were not sorry to see him, as we had had nothing since coffee and a biscuit at 1.30 A.M. It was a comfortable place for a piquet, and we made shelters³ for ourselves, expecting to stay the night. But, about 3 o'clock, a company of the Irish Fusiliers under Major O'Leary, whom I met at

¹ A letter adds about this railway station that "it was completely wrecked by the Boers about a month ago, and all the papers, tickets, etc., were left strewn over the booking-office floor."

² A letter says they built "a magnificent stone wall, about 80 yards long," for their protection.

³ "Rough shelters, with sticks, which we got from a Kaffir kraal a few yards away," says the letter.

Kasauli, three years ago, turned up to relieve us. When we got back, we found our camp pitched, and seven naval guns in position just above it—two 4.7 guns, and five 12-pounders. The Boer position, and the road bridge over the Tugela at Colenso, are plainly visible. We saw a flag of truce go to the Boer position, carrying, I hear, a letter from Sir Redvers Buller to their commander. Our Brigade is here as an escort to the guns. Two other Brigades are, I believe, going round by Springfield to turn their right flank. Our guns have not fired at all to-day. We are about 10,000 yards from the Colenso bridge.

Dec. 13, 1899. DIARY.—*13th December.* We were turned out early this morning, as it was intended to shell the enemy's position at daybreak; but, owing to the mist, our guns did not open fire till 7.15, so we got our breakfast comfortably before leaving camp. We had to turn out on account of our being immediately behind our guns, so that we should have offered a very big target to the enemy. I watched the effect of our fire from the ridge of a hill for a time, and could see the shells strike the enemy's

earthworks.¹ They were firing at a range of 9,600 yards, and I do not think the enemy had any guns to range so far, for they did not reply to our fire. The bombardment continued for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours,² after which we returned to camp. In the afternoon we struck camp and pitched it about a mile further on, our piquets occupying a ridge about 2000 yards nearer the enemy. Water is very short here, and what there is, is very dirty.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 13th December.* Two more Brigades came up from Frere yesterday evening, so it looks as if we were going to make a frontal attack here; but I expect we shall soon know. I love this life as long as we are not stuck in a camp like Estcourt, away from everything. We heard of Gatacre's defeat yesterday,—a most unfortunate affair. I am quite glad that the plans were altered, and that we came here instead of going with him, as was previously arranged.

DIARY.—*Chieveley, 15th December.* Yesterday Dec. 14, 1899.

¹ A letter says: "I got on a hill and watched the effect of our fire. As soon as we started, the enemy cleared out of their trenches. After the first few shots our fellows got the range, and pitched every shell, most of them lyddite, bang into their earthworks."

² A letter, dated 14th December, adds: "We smashed one of their guns to pieces—at least the sailors said they did—and laid flat a small camp that was within range."

morning the naval guns took up a position about 2000 yards nearer the enemy's position, and bombarded it off and on all day. They appeared to make excellent practice, but it is impossible to say what damage they did. I was out in the piquet line all the morning, watching the effect of the fire. In the evening, after dinner, we had orders to strike the camp and be ready to leave at 4 A.M.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 15th December.* I feel very depressed, so must write to you to try and cheer myself up. This morning we were defeated by the Boers, the whole disaster arising out of a gross blunder committed by the Colonel commanding the Artillery, who, poor fellow, was one of the victims of his own mistake. I will try and give you a short account of what happened. It will probably differ from all other accounts, as, of course, I do not know the ins-and-outs as those who write for the public; but, anyhow, I will tell you what I actually saw myself. For the last two days our naval guns, which are very powerful—two 4.7-inch and five 12-pounders—have been shelling the Boers' position, to try and make him disclose the position of his guns and to show his strength. But, unluckily, the wily Boer was not to be drawn, and never fired a single shot in reply. This morning Dec. 15, 1899. at 4 A.M. we marched out of camp, having struck

the tents the night before. The 7th Fusiliers were on the extreme right, we came next to them, and on our left were four batteries of artillery. There were other Brigades on their left, but I do not know in what order the regiments came. We marched towards the enemy's position above Colenso, our advance being on a hill to the left of their main position. It struck me as rather a bad position for the guns to occupy on the march, as they were on the lowest ground of all. However, we went straight ahead, while the naval guns kept up a hot fire on the hills beyond the river. They opened fire at 5.45 A.M. The Boers made no reply until the march brought two of our batteries within 1000 yards of their position. Then of a sudden there was a tremendous roll of musketry, the whole of it being directed at the guns, a maxim nordenfelt also taking part. Their best policy undoubtedly would have been to gallop straight back out of musketry fire, for artillery in the open certainly cannot hold its own against an enemy in position, if it is within rifle range; and the artillery fire is every bit as good at 2000 as it is at 1000 yards. The gunners, however, immediately unlimbered and opened fire. They came into action splendidly, but could not get their teams out of the enemy's artillery fire until they retired nearly a mile; for there was absolutely no cover, the ground over which we had advanced being an open plain. For awhile the batteries and the naval guns kept up a tremendous fusillade, but

the batteries were suffering heavily from the enemy's musketry fire, and they were at last compelled to leave their guns, and take cover in a ditch, having fired all the shell with them. Then came the question how to get the guns out of action again. They say that England's blunders have always led to her most heroic deeds; and I think you will agree with me that what followed, though on a smaller scale, deserves to be classed with the charge of Balaclava. There were no cannon to right of them, or cannon to left of them, but there were cannon in front of them, whose accuracy they had already experienced, and musketry fire, which was kicking up thousands of little clouds of dust all over the open plains. Five teams of horses started to gallop over the 1000 yards or more which separated them from the guns. I was on a rise of a hill to their right, and could see every inch of the ground from start to finish. One could see the bullets striking all round them, and it seemed a marvel that they were not hit. When they were about half way across, one team came to grief, and had to lie where they were under a hot fire. Another was struck and became a struggling mass before they reached the guns. Three got to the guns, hooked on their teams, and started to gallop back. A shell, as far as I could see, struck one of the guns, and turned it right over; but the other two got safely back. It was an awful sight, but fearfully exciting. After awhile three more teams started,

among them one of those which had already gone through it. Fancy such an experience twice in an hour! Very soon after they started I saw one horse hit. He kept on, poor brute, with his head hanging down, until other horses in the team were struck and collapsed. The other two reached the guns, but had horses wounded as they were limbering up. One only started back, but they had only gone a short way before they shared the fate of the others. Out of the three teams only two horses returned. One of them was brought by its gunner up the hill close by me as I was retiring with the maxim. I rode with him for a short way, and he told me that every other horse and man in his team had been hit. Shortly afterwards I saw that our infantry were retiring along the whole front. I could not believe that they were leaving the guns, but thought that some infantry must have been left behind to prevent the Boers from crossing the river and taking them off. No such party was left, and, after we had retired some distance, I saw the Boers crowding round the guns, and starting to move them. Ten guns were lost. I cannot understand why it was allowed, for I am convinced that if we had been allowed to remain where we were, or any other regiment in our place, supported by a battery and a few cavalry, we could easily have checked any Boers who attempted to get near the guns, and teams could have been sent down under cover of darkness to take them away. We were

pretty well under cover on the right of the line, and only had three men hit. I do not think I am taking an exaggerated view of the affair on account of its being the first action I have been in. It was most unfortunate. I do not believe that Buller ever intended to attack the position, but only meant to make a reconnaissance in force to draw their fire, and so disclose the position of their guns. Our artillery involved us in an engagement, which it would have been very difficult to carry through successfully, and in retiring I am afraid our casualties were heavy, the result being heavy loss for no return. We got back to camp at 4 o'clock all pretty tired, for we had had no meal since 3.30 in the morning, and that only consisted of a cup of coffee. I had taken a biscuit in my pocket, and, being mounted, was not as badly off as the others. Two of our naval guns had a narrow escape of sharing the fate of the field artillery. I was close by them when they opened fire. The enemy returned it very accurately, and they had to retire. They are drawn by 18 oxen,—a very large target. One shell I saw pass just over the tail of the last ox as they were limbering up. They were under fire for about 400 yards while retiring; and though several shells went very close to them, they were never hit. Of course, if they had been under musketry fire, they could never have got away. When I got back to camp, I saw in the paper that Cowan and Lambton, in the Highland Light Infantry, had been killed.

I knew them both well, and had several days' shooting with the latter last September at his home near Pembroke Dock. Please pass this letter round, if any one cares to read it. I shall not send it yet, as I hope to be able to tell you of the capture of Colenso before the mail leaves. It is an immensely strong position, but I have no doubt that we shall take it.

Tuesday, 19th December.—Mail goes to-night. Our total losses were about 1027 killed and wounded, and between 200 and 300 taken prisoners. Several fellows I know are prisoners, and one killed. Walter Congreve did very well, and will probably get a Victoria Cross. He is badly wounded.

DIARY.—*Chieveley, 15th December.* The day was very hot, and the men suffered a good deal from thirst. It was four o'clock when we got back to camp, just twelve hours since our last meal, which only consisted of a cup of coffee. My pony carried me well.¹ I was able to water him and give him a feed, so he did not come off badly.

¹ A letter says: "I was riding my pony all the time. He is wonderfully quiet. Whenever I wanted to dismount for anything, I simply left him standing by himself, with the reins thrown over his head, and he never moved, though several shells pitched and burst about 150 yards from him."

I never had an opportunity of bringing the maxim gun into action. This afternoon there has been a thunderstorm and a small storm of rain.

- Dec. 16, 1899. DIARY.—*Chieveley Camp, 18th December.* On Saturday we had a very quiet day, remaining in camp. An armistice was declared from early morning until 12 midnight, and our stretcher-bearers were out all day bringing in the wounded. One train-load went down to Maritzburg, full of wounded, on Friday evening, and another on Saturday morning. I am afraid there will be many train-loads still left. On Saturday evening we had orders to be ready to move during the
- Dec. 17, 1899. night. About 2 A.M. we were up, and tents were struck. We remained lying out on the right flank till about 5 o'clock to cover the retirement of the naval guns. The whole division moved back, two brigades retiring to Frere Camp. I am glad to say we have not occupied our former camping ground, which was horribly dusty. We are about 1300 yards further back. On Sunday all was quiet, except for three or four shots fired by our big guns about noon. I do not know what object was aimed at. Every one is very disgusted

with the action of the 15th, and nothing else is talked of. The stories and opinions expressed are too numerous to be mentioned. A good many troops appear to have crossed the river, and, they say, they could have rushed the position, if they had been allowed to do so. It was during the retirement that our losses were so heavy. Hurt and I rode out yesterday morning to look for a bathing place, and found a most refreshing pool about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. It was a mile beyond our piquet line, but luckily we found the 13th Hussars, who were out reconnoitring, halted there to water their horses. We took advantage of their protection, and had a lovely dip. The supply of water is a great difficulty here. It is scarce and dirty. I believe a good supply could be obtained if the Royal Engineers had Artesian borers.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 18th December.* We are living in a horrible place now. It is very hot all day, and the dust blows everywhere, and makes one very thirsty. We all mess together, and have a big waterproof sheet, stolen from the railway. With this and five poles we build a shelter, but it very frequently blows down in the middle of meals.

The men live seventeen in a tent, which is rather a crush. Officers have a tent between three. At present I am sitting on the floor inside my tent, with my back against the pole, and am writing on the top of a box. I am afraid this war will be a very long one, and quite possibly we shall not get home before next Christmas. The other day on the battle-field I picked up a great big shell and took it into camp; but it was too heavy to carry about with me, so I have had to leave it behind.

Dec. 20, 1899. DIARY.—*21st December.* Yesterday I was on piquet all day. It was much cooler. In the evening a cavalry piquet of the 13th Hussars was surprised by a party of Boers. One was killed and two were wounded. They were, however, paid
Dec. 21, 1899. back this evening, for a party of Thorneycroft's ambushed themselves near the dead Hussar, and, when some of the enemy came to rifle the body, they killed two of them and wounded three. Our guns fire regularly every morning and evening, but it is impossible to find out what damage they do. It is reported this evening that Lord Roberts is coming out to take command in South Africa.

Dec. 22, 1899. DIARY.—*22nd December.* Bathing parade in the morning. I bought a sucking pig from a

Kaffir kraal.¹ We have quite a farm-yard in camp now, for I found a couple of turkeys a few days ago, and bought them for Christmas dinner. There was a reconnaissance to-day, and some cattle were captured. The Boers used them as a bait to draw the cavalry into an ambush; but they were too cautious, and the cavalry sent back to camp for Mounted Infantry. One of the 4.7's fired this evening on a farm-house where some Boers had been seen. A new 4.7-inch gun has been brought up, and has been mounted on one of the carriages in the place of one of the others, which has become somewhat corroded.

LETTER. — *Chieveley Camp, 24th December.* Many thanks for your Christmas letter and for the socks, which are quite the most useful thing you could have sent out to me. In my last letter home I asked that socks should occasionally be sent out; for, though I brought several pairs with me, I find that when at times one has to wear them day and night, they wear out very quickly. I have a good servant who darns them for me, but still they soon go again. We certainly are not living in the lap of luxury here. We are in a very dusty camp,

¹ "And brought him home alive," adds a letter, "in a sack across my saddle."

which gets worse and worse every day. Everything is filthy, including oneself, and washing water has to be got from $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. Don't be anxious on my account if you read of a battle and heavy losses in this part of the world, for I feel pretty sure that I shall get through safe and sound. It is curious how very much more people think of the war at home than we do out here. Every one is as cheery as possible, and we are all longing to have another whack at them. I hope next time we shall make up for our last battle. We have some sports arranged for to-morrow, and some pony races for the following day. There was a report that the Boers would attack us on Christmas Day. I wish they would, for though to fight is the last thing I wish to do on Christmas Day, which has such very different associations for all of us, still, if we could only draw them out and make them come for us, the war would not last long. They play their own game too well, and always fight behind very strong cover, upon which our guns seem to have small effect. We were a long way out in thinking we should spend Christmas in Pretoria. Perhaps midsummer, or next Christmas, may see us there.

Dec. 24, 1899. LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 24th December.* I have to sit up late to-night, as I am on duty, so I take the opportunity of writing to thank you very much for your Christmas letter, and also for the "baccy." It was very kind of you to think of

sending it, for English "baccy" is very hard to get here, and is very expensive. It will be a most acceptable present. People at home seem most enthusiastic about the war, and certainly they are most generous. I am afraid it will be a long business, in spite of the large numbers we have out here, for our part is always to attack, and the enemy always fortify their positions strongly. The consequence must be big loss of life on our side in every engagement, though I think there can be no doubt as to the ultimate result of the war. I am afraid our defeat here will have given rather a shock to every one at home. I hope it is put down to the right cause. It was the fault of the leaders, and not the men. Nothing could have been more magnificent than the behaviour of the latter. They had a task to perform which is the most difficult that can be set men to do—that is, to retire under a heavy fire. And to see them march steadily back when men were being knocked over right and left, was simply marvellous. It is a far more difficult thing than rushing a position, for there is a wild excitement then to carry men on. We have two big naval guns up here, which every morning, and generally of an evening, fire a few shells into the enemy's position. The Boer army and ours are only five miles apart, but the Tugela river runs between us. We have nine or ten thousand men here. Two brigades and the Dragoons have gone back to Frere. We are encamped on each side of

the railway, so there is no difficulty in getting up supplies.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 24th December.* Some fellows have grown beards since we have been out here. Bill Harris has quite a fine one. I started one, but I felt such a beast that I cut it off after a few days. Captain Throckmorton looks exactly like the advertisement for Brooke's Monkey Brand soap. I see that they have moved our Dépôt from Pembroke Dock to Crown Hill.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 24th December.* I wish you could see the horrid filthy state I am in at this moment. It has been very hot all day, and during the last half-hour a dust storm has been blowing. It causes one far more discomfort than rain, for it gets into everything and simply coats one with dirt. There is no getting away from it, so I have fastened this sheet of paper down, and am sitting in the middle of it. Half our mess covering, which consists of four poles and a large waterproof sheet, has blown down, and is flying in the wind.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 27th December.* Things have been dull this last week, except for occasional little fights between scouts, in which both sides seem to come off pretty even. We fire twenty or thirty shells into the enemy's position

every day, but I doubt whether we do very much harm. We are not bothered by them, as they have no guns here with long enough range to reach us. There will be a move soon, I expect, but I think that our Brigade will probably remain here for at least another fortnight. We did not have a very lively Christmas, but we made the best of it. We had a couple of good turkeys and a sucking pig, which I had purchased from Kaffir kraals in the neighbourhood; and we have plenty of plum puddings which have been sent to fellows from home.

DIARY.—*27th December.* There has been no excitement since Friday, except Christmas, on which day there was peace, in so far that our guns did not open fire. There were sports for the men in the afternoon, but they were badly managed and were not much of a success. Yesterday—Boxing Day—Bethune's Mounted Infantry held a small race meeting, in which there were several open events. I ran in the first race, the qualification for which I never discovered, for opinions differed considerably on the subject. The "Zebra" led well to begin with, but did his best to make for the camp on the left of the course, and did not care a jot about the race. I had no spurs on, else I think I might have pulled it off. I came in third.

Later in the afternoon I rode him again in a three-furlong scurry for ponies under 14.2. He again tried to run out of the course, and it was all I could do to get him between the flags. I came in first, very close to the left flag-post, which was supported by wire stays. The pony pecked just after passing the winning post. I came half out of the saddle and caught my head full against the flank of a horse which was in the way. I nearly broke my neck, but not quite, and was knocked back into my saddle again. I pocketed £6 over the race—£2, 5s. prize, and £3, 15s. entrance fees. I hear that Hildyard's Brigade is going back to Frere soon to join in the outflanking movement, and we are to remain here to hold the enemy in front. There was rain last night which laid the dust; but it is very close again to-day, and feels like more thunder.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 27th December.* I do not know for certain what the plans for the future are, but I think our Brigade will stay here for at least another fortnight. I see in the papers that Lord Roberts has already started for South Africa. His arrival will leave Sir Redvers Buller free to direct his whole attention to operations in Natal. Things certainly have not gone as well as they

might have done; but I think they will shortly take a turn for the better, and when once we get the enemy on the move I hope we shall not give them an opportunity of offering much resistance until they get to Pretoria. If they mean to fight it out to the end, we shall doubtless have a big job there.

LETTER. — *Chieveley Camp, 27th December.*
We are living in a very dusty camp, and the ground is full of ants and small beetles. A few days ago I lifted up one of my gaiters and found a nest of small black beetles underneath. I thought the best thing was to leave them quiet, so I put the gaiter back again, and left them. Last night there was a heavy storm of rain, which stirred them all up, and they started creeping over me. I caught several of them crawling up my legs and arms. I also had a nasty buzzing in one of my ears, and this morning out came a horrid little spider. However, one soon gets not to mind these little discomforts.

DIARY. — *Chieveley Camp, 30th December.*
There has been no move yet. I do not expect there will be, until Sir Charles Warren's Division gets to Frere. Rain has come at last, and with a vengeance too. It began about 6 o'clock yesterday Dec. 29, 1899. evening, and poured all night. Several tents were

blown down, the whole camp was swimming, and most things wet through. The companies on piquet had a very uncomfortable night, for they had no shelter of any sort, and were of course soaked to the skin. Very unpleasant for men who have no change of clothing. We have rebuilt the mess shelter to-day. It blows down every time there is any wind or heavy rain. We have also built a capital kitchen, with some corrugated iron, which was found in a deserted house close by. There was a kitchen range in the house, which we have appropriated to our own use. Fortunately, the sun came out for a couple of hours this morning, so that our things have had a fair chance of drying. It looks, however, as if we should get another soaking to-night. I am getting rather sick of this life, for there is no excitement to compensate one for the discomfort. I have been employed the last few days in digging gun-pits for the maxim gun, and taking ranges from various points which we should hold in case of attack.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 2nd January 1900.*
Since the unfortunate battle of Colenso, the enemy have further strengthened the position, which I

think now is almost impregnable. At any rate, it could only be taken with great loss of life. The idea now is, as far as we can hear, to make turning movements, on the right *viâ* Weenen, and on the left *viâ* Springfield, while our Brigade, and possibly Hildyard's also, remain here to hold the enemy in front. I am getting rather tired of this place, and shall not be sorry when the enemy are kicked out of Colenso, and we are able to go on. This place has improved since we have had heavy rain. It was not pleasant while it lasted, and my tent was about 2 inches deep in water, but it has laid the dust, and cleared the atmosphere. I was on piquet yesterday and last night, so have a lazy day to-day. Piquet duty is not pleasant on a wet night, as, of course, one gets soaked through and cannot lie down at all. Last night, luckily, was beautiful.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 4th January 1900.* It will be three weeks to-morrow since the battle of Colenso, and all that time we have been sitting here doing practically nothing. I think that a move will be made shortly, for Sir Charles Warren is at Estcourt now, and as soon as his division is complete, he is sure to advance. Camp life becomes rather dull after awhile without any excitement. I sent to Maritzburg for some polo sticks and balls, and started knocking about in the afternoons. On Tuesday I was cantering after the ball when my pony stumbled badly, and threw me, and I sprained

my wrist slightly. It is rather a nuisance, as of course I shall not be able to use my hand for some days. Our guns blaze off daily in the hopes of catching some of the enemy in the trenches; and once or twice lately, they have laid the guns in the evening and fired them during the night. They are banging away now. Our camp, though dull, is in splendid condition; the health is good, and the food arrangements are excellent. The men get 1 lb. of fresh meat and $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of bacon a day; also bread, cheese, tea or coffee;¹ occasionally an allowance of lime juice. There is no drink allowed, except on special occasions, when the men can get a pint or quart of beer on payment. The weather has improved since we have had rain. We no longer live in clouds of dust, as we did before. It is also much cooler. We have still two Brigades here, Barton's and Hildyard's; also the 13th Hussars, Thorneycroft's and Bethune's Mounted Infantry, the Imperial Light Horse, South African Light Horse, and six naval guns. On Tuesday our Mounted Infantry scouts came on a party of twelve Boers having breakfast. They got within 900 yards of them, and killed three before they knew they were in danger. The others bolted. I wish I was with the Mounted Infantry! They have a lot of work, but it is exciting.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 4th January.* Every

¹ Another letter adds potatoes.

day is much the same as another here. We are generally on fatigue, cutting down trees or digging shelter trenches, or else on piquet, which means day and night, and is very unpleasant when it is wet. The armoured train is up here, and I think it is intended to do something with it to-night. The sailors have dressed the engine in coils of rope, to prevent the splinters of shells from doing any harm. Sir Charles Warren is at Estcourt now, and as soon as his Division is complete, there will be a move. I hope this time it will be successful, for if we continue to meet with reverses, goodness knows how long the war will last, and any reverse means a large number of casualties and lives lost to no purpose.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 7th January.* Yes- Jan. 6, 1900. terday we had our first excitement for three weeks. I was out on piquet when I heard heavy firing in the direction of Ladysmith about 2.30 A.M. It only lasted about twenty minutes, but started again at 4.45, and continued till 10 or 11. We could not tell whether it was the Boers attacking Ladysmith, or our fellows making a sortie; but about 10 A.M. we received a signal message from Ladysmith¹—"The Boers attacked us on all sides, but

¹ *Vid* Weenen, according to the Diary, which also adds: "Later news told us that the fighting had been very fierce, one trench having been three times captured by the Boers, though each time they were driven out at the point of the bayonet."

were repulsed with heavy loss at all points. Lord Ava wounded in the head." Later on we heard that the 60th and Gordons had got at them with the bayonet. In the afternoon we made a demonstration in front of Colenso. We were all out, but the artillery did all the work, throwing a good many shells into every part of the enemy's position. I saw three shells from our field guns go bang into a party of Boers riding away from their trenches. A good many were knocked over. I could count five horses lying on the ground. I think we must have done them a good deal of damage,¹ but they never replied at all. We shall probably move soon, for Sir Charles Warren's Division is nearly complete, and will try and work round the flank of the enemy higher up the river. I doubt very much, too, whether the Boers mean to stop round Ladysmith much longer, as they are wanted for the protection of their own country. We shall very likely go back to Durban after Ladysmith has been relieved, and so by sea to East London to join General Gatacre. I hope we shall, for I feel sure there will be a good deal of fighting there before the war is over. I hope we shall have a chance of seeing the Boer position when it has been evacuated by them. Some of their trenches are so big and deep, that

¹ A letter, dated 10th January, says: "The position was heavily shelled by our guns, which I think did some damage, for several ambulance carts were brought down to the river early on Sunday morning, which was 7th January."

they can ride into them and get cover for their horses as well as themselves.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 8th January.* I must say that, so far, our Generals here have shown very little ability to tackle the wily Boer. Here we are within five miles of the enemy, and, except for the one absurd frontal attack, we have done nothing. We have had over 20,000 men close up to the enemy for a month exactly, and now we have Sir Charles Warren's Division, which numbers, I suppose, 10,000.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 9th January 1900.* Jan. 9, 1900. I am on piquet to-day, and a wretched day it is for it. It has been raining all day, but luckily we have put up shelters by our piquet posts, which afford a certain amount of cover. Otherwise, if it happens to be wet when one is on piquet, one has to sit through it, day and night, and make the best of it. Several times a whole company has come in soaked to the skin, and they have no change of clothes, and no chance of drying anything unless the sun shines.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 10th January.* Jan. 10, 1900. Very many thanks for last week's parcel, which contained most useful articles. A white handkerchief is a great treat. There has been a move in camp to-day. General Hildyard's Brigade has

left us, and with them our big guns and all the Field Artillery. Our Brigade is left alone, with 200 Mounted Infantry and four naval guns. If the enemy attack us in force, we shall have a pretty tough job to defend ourselves. About 25,000 men, under General Buller, are moving westward to try and attack the enemy's right flank. So we may look for important news within the next few days. I think a great deal hangs on this movement, and I only pray that it may be successful. If it fails, it may lead to very serious consequences. Yesterday was very bad here, but to-day it is hot, and will dry up everything again. We must expect rainy weather for the next two months. The flies are an awful pest. There are thousands of them, and they get on to and into everything one eats.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 10th January.* We are quite a small force at Chieveley now. Of course this means that duties come pretty heavy, and we have always to keep quite close to camp. I have been almost daily to a river, about 3 miles away, for a bathe; but I shall have to stop that now, for I do not want to go to Pretoria as a prisoner. I hope the New Year, and the arrival of Lord Roberts in Africa, will bring us good luck. I suppose we are within our rights in searching these German ships. It is a great pity that we do not possess Delagoa Bay. Every one says that a

quantity of ammunition, etc., is being smuggled into the Transvaal through there.

LETTER.—*Chieveley, 11th January.* Hildyard's Brigade have gone. It is horrible being left behind, for not only does one miss all the fun, but duties come very heavy, when there is only a small force to hold a place. I do not think we are likely to be attacked, for they will need every man they can muster, to try and check Buller. He is making a flank movement with over 25,000 men. They ought to take a bit of stopping, and I expect tomorrow, or the next day, we shall hear their guns. I believe he has sixty with him, if he is taking them all up. There are 6 field batteries, 2 howitzer and one mountain battery—six guns in each=54; two 4.7-inch guns, and several 12-pounder naval guns. We have not much more information about the attack on Ladysmith, though we know the Devon Regiment lost 1 officer and 16 men killed, and 3 officers and 33 men wounded. De Villiers, the Free State Commander-in-Chief, is said to have been killed. A very silly affair took place near Colesberg a few days ago, in which 7 officers and 70 men of the Suffolk Regiment were killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. Our killed and wounded during this war will add up to a good many thousands at the end. We cannot get reliable information of the Boer losses, but I expect their's are pretty heavy

too. Some of our Regulations, now that we are a small force close to an enemy, may interest you:—

1. No one may go beyond the piquet line.
2. All lights must be extinguished at 8 P.M.
3. Every one is to be roused at 3 A.M., but no lights allowed till 4 A.M.
4. Relief of piquets leave camp 3.15; remainder of battalion dress and arm, ready to turn out at a moment's notice.

Three companies are on piquet every night, so, as there are eight in a battalion, you see it comes pretty often. I do not stay awake all night when I am on piquet, for I find it impossible, but one can never settle down to a proper sleep, and one has to be constantly up and moving about. I thought it quite possible that we should be attacked at daybreak this morning; but, as it has not come off, I think we shall probably be left alone.

Jan. 11, 1900.

DIARY.—11th *January*. This morning we were suddenly turned out, as our scouts reported that they were driven in by large numbers of the enemy's cavalry. They proved eventually to be some of our own Mounted Infantry. That is the worst of allowing some of our irregular troops to wear squash hats. It is very difficult at any distance to distinguish them from Boers.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 14th January.* We have been expecting every day to hear the guns of Buller's army, which has gone west. We are in signal communication with them, and by two routes now with Ladysmith; but all the information is kept very dark, for, if it is let out, it is the talk of the camp, and every camp is, I believe, full of spies. Buller's force is only about 10 miles to the west of us. The flies here are a horrible pest. We kill thousands of them every night on our mess awning with burning paraffin.¹ The horses suffer a good deal from them. It has been very hot the last few days, but there has been very little to do; and, as there is generally a cool breeze, one does not feel it much. We have nearly a full moon now, and last night was quite lovely. I pulled my valise out of my tent and slept out of doors. There is a report going about to-day that Buller has crossed the Tugela higher up without resistance. I don't know whether it is true, but I think it is quite possible, for I think very likely the Boers will not offer much resistance now to our relief of Ladysmith, for they tried their hardest to take it on Saturday, 6th, and found they couldn't. So I don't see that they have very much object in staying here longer; for, if they were badly defeated

¹ Another letter says—"The flies have become an awful pest. They are bound to become so in a standing camp in the hot weather, for though the place is as clean as possible, and all refuse burnt, flies, of course, congregate and increase by millions."

by Buller, they would find it very difficult to retreat. I hear that they are going to try and raise some Mounted Infantry in the Brigade. If they do, I shall try and get command of our section, but I am not sure whether the Colonel will let me leave the maxim gun. I like Mounted Infantry work very much. One always gets some excitement, as one is constantly in contact with the enemy. I am very much afraid that our brigade will not see Ladysmith, but I think we shall probably go to join General Gatacre soon after it is relieved.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 14th January.* We have several dogs which have attached themselves to our mess, and we name them after the several Generals. We have Buller, Clery—or “Whiskerandos” as he is usually called, because General Clery has very big whiskers—also Warren and Barton. There are such a lot of curious animals in this country. We have found a lot of chameleons; that is the animal that changes to the colour of what it is put upon. Then there are insects which look exactly like bits of grass, or bits of stick, and they keep perfectly still, so that it is very hard to find them.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 16th January.* General Buller has not yet had his battle.¹

¹ The Diary says: “Lord Dundonald’s Cavalry have been on the top of Zwaart’s Kop for several days.”

To-day was fixed as the probable date, but we do not hear his guns. Yesterday Jan. 15, 1900. we made another demonstration. Two of our companies, mine being one, and two of the 7th Fusiliers, went out at 3.30 A.M. as escort to two naval 12-pounders. We took up an advanced position about 5000 yards from the enemy. During the morning we shelled their trenches, but I doubt very much whether we do them much harm, for they have dug their trenches so deep.¹ I saw altogether quite 100 Boers ride out of one trench. They come out three or four at a time, and immediately scatter, so that they offer a very poor target. About 11.30 I walked back to camp, and brought out the maxim gun. In the afternoon we were reinforced by a battalion from Frere—made up of drafts waiting to join their regiments in Ladysmith—by one company Mounted Infantry, and two field guns. We advanced to within 1800 yards from the river, and opened fire with the field guns and rifles. I fired with the maxim on some Boer horses on the other side of the river, to pick up the range. I dropped one and wounded another. Poor brutes! I was rather sorry for them,

¹ Diary of 15th January says: "They have a long horse trench, about 500 yards on the other side of the river. We saw a number of them ride out of the trench and away to the rear of the position. I think they sleep in the trench, and have made head cover for themselves. We saw a number of them riding about in all parts of the position, but never more than three or four go about together."

and stopped. I never got a shot at a Boer. The range was exactly 2000 yards. I was rather pleased to find I could get such accurate shooting at such a long range. The enemy would not reply to us, though they fired at some of our scouts who went down close to the river. We retired and got back to camp about 5.30 P.M. We had breakfasts and dinners cooked out. It was a pleasant change to being in camp all day, and was good practice for the men; but I don't think we did the enemy much harm,¹ and it is not particularly exciting when they will not reply to our fire.

Jan. 16, 1900. DIARY.—*16th January.* No excitement all day. About 5 o'clock a terrific storm came over.² I was out riding, but galloped back to camp, and got under cover just in time. General Buller has not attacked to-day, though I think we heard a few shots in that direction this morning. The enemy are still working in the trenches round Colenso.

¹ Another letter, speaking of the earlier part of the day, says: "I don't think our guns shot very well, though, as a rule, their shooting has been splendid. The enemy can always see the flash and have time to get under cover before the shell reaches them."

² Another letter says: "It blew tremendously hard for a quarter of an hour, and then poured with rain. Several sheets of galvanized iron were flying about the camp, and two tents were cut. Our mess shelter came to grief as usual. It always comes down in a storm, and new improvements are made each time it is put up again."

DIARY.—*17th January.* Early in the morning Jan. 17, 1900. we heard heavy firing in the direction of Potgeiter's Drift, where General Buller is expected to cross; but it only continued for a short while, though it has been repeated several times during the day. Two naval 12-pounders occupied the forward position, escorted by two companies Royal Irish Fusiliers, and one company Royal Scots Fusiliers. They only fired about twenty shells. It has been very cloudy all day, and quite cool. No rain. Lovett played the "Zebra" at polo.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 18th January.* Of course we cannot make any attempt to cross the river, as we only have a small force here, and have to hold the rail head. We have just seen a balloon Jan. 18, 1900. over the hills in General Buller's direction. This morning we started with the idea of trying to draw the enemy, but something went wrong, and we came back. Guns are going all round to-day, in our front—from Ladysmith and General Buller. The latter seems to be going very cautiously.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 18th January.* We have been in South Africa just over two months. How the time flies! We have to turn out and dress every morning before 3 A.M. now. No lights are allowed before 4 A.M. and none after 8.30 P.M.

We have breakfast at 7, lunch at 12, and dinner at 6. We feed very well.

DIARY.—19th *January*. I was on piquet last night, and we had a tremendous storm of rain, but fortunately our shelter stood, and I kept pretty dry. This morning Radcliffe relieved me at 3.30, as a force was going out to reconnoitre Robinson's Drift. We left camp at 5.30. The force consisted of four of our companies and four of the 7th, and two mountain guns (4th Battery, who are now here). The two naval guns under Wilde occupied their usual position, with two companies Royal Irish Fusiliers as escort. Our scouts of the Imperial Light Horse got close to the river, and reported some of the enemy to be in their trenches there. They were fired on.¹ We could see a good many—about fifty—Boers ride down from the hill above. Some of them crept pretty close up to the river, and so boxed up our scouts; for, though they could get fairly good

¹ A letter adds: "Our scouts as they neared the river were fired on. I was in a place at the time where I could see all the ground on the opposite side of the river, but it was absolutely impossible to tell, except by sound, where the shots came from. One could see no smoke and no enemy."

cover where they were, they had to cross quite open ground retiring. I saw one horse shot which was tied up under a tree. Presently one of the scouts made a bolt for it and galloped back. The bullets struck all round him, but he came safely through. Two more tried, but their horses were both hit. They ran back, throwing themselves flat on the ground when they got a bit blown. One appeared to be hurt, and Braithwaite rode down, and gave him a lift on the "Camel." I saw six Boers take shelter behind a tree, close by the river, and, finding the range to be 2400 yards, I fired at them with the maxim, but I could not see the bullets strike, as there was a mealie field just this side of the river, so could not tell whether I did them any harm. The maxim soon drew their rifle fire, and a good many bullets came straight at us, but fell short. They got up to us gradually, and one hit the gun and whizzed underneath close to my leg as I was firing. Shortly after, the two mountain guns came into action. They are muzzle-loaders, as all mountain guns are, and fire black powder. They shot well, and threw two or three shells right into the tree which I had been firing at.

One of our scouts, whose horse had been killed, took the opportunity to run back,¹ and only a few shots were fired at him. Jones, Army Service Corps, rode down and helped him out. The others would not come, so about 1 o'clock we retired back to camp, pretty hungry, as we had had no breakfast. The other scouts are reported to have come in this evening.² We have no authentic news of Buller yet, but, from what we can hear, he has crossed the river. I fired 160 rounds to-day.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 21st January.* We are expecting a good deal of excitement, for General Buller has crossed the river, and the fight must come within the next few days. For all we know, it may be going on at this moment, for we can hear his guns banging away. At first I felt it horribly annoying to hear guns in the distance, and to be sitting in camp doing nothing, but I have got accustomed to that now. This morning we can hear Buller's guns, guns firing at Ladysmith,

¹ A letter says: "He always started to run directly he heard one of our guns fire, and, after he had gone a short way, threw himself flat on his stomach, and waited for the next shot before starting again."

² A letter, dated 21st January, says: "Four of them eventually surrendered to the enemy—poor-spirited, I think. At the end of the day we had seven horses and six men missing. These were all lost by the scouts. Nobody else was hit."

and our own guns, which have gone to their forward position, to shell any one they see knocking about near Colenso. A nice peaceful Sunday, isn't it? Yesterday was, I think, the hottest day Jan. 20, 1899. since we landed in South Africa, and the flies were very bad. It was followed by a tremendous storm, which broke over us about 8.30 o'clock. The rain was very heavy, and the trench round our tent was soon full. We were congratulating ourselves on its standing up so well, when all of a sudden came a tremendous gust of wind, accompanied by hail, and I found myself lying in pyjamas in the trench, while the tent had blown right over my head. It was quite impossible to face the hail. I am not exaggerating when I say the stones were as big as marbles—some of them very sharp. I crawled under the fallen tent for protection, and sat tight till the storm was over, after which I found shelter in another tent.¹ Twenty-six out of about eighty of our tents were blown down, and our mess shelter as usual was blown flat. It is not a pleasant experience. Luckily, there is a hot sun this Jan. 21, 1900. morning, and nearly everything is dry again, but any books that were exposed are of course spoilt. I have not yet thanked you for the tobacco and pipe, which arrived by last mail.

¹ Another letter says: "Of course nearly all my things were wet through, as we were quite unprepared for such a catastrophe. The only thing dry was the outside of my great-coat, which had been folded up, so I turned it inside out and slept in it."

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 22nd January.* I cannot give you much news as to the really interesting part of the war—that is, General Buller's advance on Ladysmith—as we are rather out of it here. We hear his big guns banging away, and we know that on Saturday there was a fight, in which we drove the Boers back about 3 miles, though their main position is still in front of us. We had about 200 men wounded on Saturday. I expect much the same sort of fighting took place yesterday (Sunday), but we have not heard anything about it yet. You asked in one of your letters whether the reports of the Boers constantly abusing the white flag are true. I know of two instances which are pretty certainly genuine. Captain Lambton, Royal Navy, commanding naval guns in Ladysmith, on one occasion fired at one of the enemy's guns, and saw the shell strike it. A moment later a man jumped on to the gun, and waved a white flag; whereupon Lambton fired no more. Twenty minutes later he was surprised to see the gun he had struck open fire again. He reported it to Sir G. White. On the other side of the country a fellow named Chandos Pole went out to receive a flag of truce. He was taken prisoner and taken back to the Boer camp, and, in spite of Lord Methuen's remonstrances, he was not given up again. General Buller has just issued a proclamation to the troops with him, and among other things has warned them of the ill use the Boers make of

the white flag, by which, he says, two officers to his knowledge have been killed.

DIARY.—*23rd January.* We have heard a good deal of firing westward the last three days, and we hear that they are fighting their way forward slowly. On Sunday the Irish Fusiliers suddenly received orders to go to Frere, and from there half the battalion have gone on to Springfield. This move has made duties here still heavier, and regulations still more strict. We have to keep dressed with boots on all night now, ready to turn out at a moment's notice. This morning we left Jan. 23, 1900. camp for another demonstration. Wilde with his two guns and two of our companies, B and F, occupied the forward position. About 10 o'clock three more of our companies, A, D, H, left camp and advanced along the east side of the railway; the 7th Fusiliers, with four companies, extended in echelon to our right, and then the other two naval guns. On the extreme right were the Mounted Infantry (Scottish Rifles' Mounted Infantry from Frere), and two guns from Frere. We halted 3400 yards from the belt of trees fringing the river bank, and the four naval guns opened

fire. On the left rifle fire was opened on our scouts, but it was never severe. About 2 o'clock a very hot fire was opened on the right, from the bottom of Hlangwani Hill, but I could not see what they were firing at. We retired about 3 P.M., and got into camp about 4. The field guns and Mounted Infantry on the right remained out, and we heard a good deal of firing. They got into camp at 6 P.M., and came in to dine with us. We heard that they had got into a pretty tight corner. Ten of the South African Light Horse had got shut up in a kraal, and were surrounded by Boers. For some time our Mounted Infantry were unable to extricate them, but eventually they got seven away. Then they were suddenly fired on by a party of about thirty Boers, who had crept up a donga, and got into a stone zareba. They fired on the Mounted Infantry horses,¹ and on the Mounted Infantry as they retired, but they appear to have shot very badly. The maxim gun of the 14th Hussars came into action, turned the Boers out of the zareba, and covered the retreat of the Mounted Infantry.

¹ Another letter says: "They fired on the Mounted Infantry led horses at 200 yards, which stampeded them, and so the Mounted Infantry had to retire on foot under fire."

About ten or fifteen are missing, among them De Rougemont,¹ who was wounded. It was quite cool all day.

LETTER. — *Chieveley Camp, 24th January.* Jan. 24, 1900.
General Buller is at this moment fighting a battle. His guns have been hard at work since 4 A.M. and there is still, at 11 A.M., a heavy cannonade. A heliograph message has just come in to say that our infantry have been fighting their way forward all the morning, and are near the enemy's main position. I hope they will clear them out of it before nightfall, and Ladysmith will be relieved this week. Unfortunately, it is hot to-day. Yesterday would have been a splendid day for a battle, cloudy and cool. We had a day out, and some of the Mounted Infantry had a very warm time. As far as I have heard at present, two officers and two men were wounded, one of the officers being a doctor,² who went out after the show was over with a red-cross flag to look for the wounded officer. He was shot at, badly wounded in the stomach, and both of them had to lie out all night. The South African Light Horse are not particularly good at their work yet. They have not enough experience, and are frequently getting

¹ "De Rougemont died as he was being brought in the next morning," another letter says.

² "Named Dalton," says another letter.

themselves into tight places, from which it is difficult to extricate them. It is impossible to say what effect the relief of Ladysmith will have on the war. Perhaps it is best not to calculate until it is an accomplished fact.

Jan. 27, 1900. DIARY.—*Chieveley, 27th January.* I have been out all day with my company on the forward gun position as escort to the two naval guns. A siding is being constructed, so that the guns can be run down by train instead of being drawn down by bullocks.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 28th January.* Since my last letter we have had news of Buller, but, alas! only sad and depressing news. There is nothing well authenticated yet; but last night the rumour was, that after taking Spion Kop, a very strong position, too many troops were crowded on to it,¹ and became a deadly target to the shrapnel shell of the enemy, fired, it is said, from the field guns captured from us at the battle of Colenso. The order was given for some of them to retire, but a bungling of the orders, which seems so often to have caused our misfortunes, made the whole lot retire, and the position was again occupied by the enemy. It was also reported that Buller

¹ The Diary says: "About 6000 troops were crowded into a space suitable for about 200." This entry is dated 27th January.

had re-crossed the Tugela, but this I scarcely believe; in fact, I hear it is contradicted this morning, and that he intends to make a second attempt. Our casualties are said to be 1800 killed and wounded.¹ The 60th Rifles and Lancashire Fusiliers have lost very heavily. Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry lost 120 out of 170 engaged. You can imagine how news like this depresses one. Here we have nothing but the war to think of. We are very near the scene of action, but we get very little news. I wish we were with Buller. It is dull enough here. Our Brigadier, General Barton, is senior Brigadier, and so the separate command here has been given to him, worse luck to it! I hope Buller will stick to it, and try again. The luck must turn, and I feel confident that next time we shall succeed. Perhaps in the end our reverses will prove a benefit, though an expensive

¹ A letter, dated 30th January says: "It is most disappointing to us all that General Buller's advance has again been checked, for we all pinned our faith on him, and felt confident that Ladysmith would be relieved by last Saturday. As usual, the courage of the troops seems to have been beyond all praise, and I really believe that there are few troops in the world who could have remained at the top of Spion Kop under such a tremendous artillery fire. The night march and attack were carried out to perfection, and they accomplished the object with which they set out; but, having gained the hill, it was found that they could not take artillery up, and so the position had to be abandoned. The difficulties of attack in this country are immense, for the whole of it is so well adapted for defence, and certainly the Boers use these advantages to the fullest extent. Our losses were, of course, very heavy, but I hear that a large number of the wounds are only slight."

one, for we have always considered ourselves practically invincible; and, indeed, one might well think so, when one sees the bravery of our men.¹ It is the mode of our fighting, I think, which is at fault, and our losses must always be very severe when we advance over the open against an enemy one cannot see, hidden behind excellent cover, and armed with modern rifles. It is impossible to say how long the war will last. Many people, who know the Dutch, say they mean to fight to the end. When once we can carry the war into their country we ought to go ahead well, for they have no strong positions that they can hold, and in the open there really can be no doubt as to the result.

Jan. 30, 1900. LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 30th January.* It is a wet day, which appears to be a very uncommon event out here, for nearly all the rain we have had has come about 8 or 9 o'clock at night. I am taking the opportunity to write my letters for the mail. You will, I am afraid, have been very disappointed at Buller's second check. It is, I think, difficult to find a word to express the result of the action, for I do not think you can call it a defeat or reverse when a force fights for several consecutive days, captures the points of attack, holds them till dark,

¹ A letter, dated 24th January 1900, says: "Really, if our fellows were not so brave, and thought a bit more of shielding their own bodies behind stones, we should do better, but they all joke among themselves, even when they are under a hot fire."

then retires as they are found to be no use, or, at any rate, not worth the loss they must sustain by remaining there. The obvious question appears to be, "Why cannot the General get sufficiently good information regarding the country beforehand?" We certainly have got a difficult job in front of us here, but it has got to be done, and, when it is done, I think the most difficult part of the war will be over. Buller's army is in very good spirits. The Boers are equally confident, and think that we shall shortly be asking for terms. I hope to goodness the Government will not follow the example of 1881, whatever our difficulties and misfortunes may be. The health of the camps here is excellent, except Ladysmith, and they say that the enteric there is not as bad as it was. We get polo several days a week in the evenings now, which gives one good exercise and a little excitement besides the war. A standing camp becomes very dull after a time. We have been here seven weeks now, and, as far as we can see, we may be another seven. The Boers have barbed wire in the river, which is a nasty obstacle.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 30th January.* I thought probably FitzGerald, in Ladysmith, had not heard of you all¹ for a long time, so I sent a

¹ Refers to 11th Hussars, FitzGerald being a subaltern in that regiment.

signal message to him, to say that I had heard from you from Cairo, and that all were well. I am afraid they must be sadly disappointed, as indeed we all are, that Buller has been checked. It is deuced hard to see what he is to do now. Every day will make it harder, for the Boers are quite untiring in digging fresh trenches to strengthen their positions. I expect they have a large number of Kaffirs to do the work for them. Yesterday we sent a flag of truce to Colenso to arrange about the exchange of prisoners. They had a talk with some of the enemy, who seem to be very cock-a-hoop.¹ It would be very bad if Ladysmith had to be abandoned. I think they are quite well off at present, but they must be getting fairly sick of being shut up. I don't think the Boers will attack them again in a hurry. They got a pretty good dose on the 6th, when they attacked. They seem to have been much bolder than usual. The Boer reports of their losses are quite ridiculous. I think there will be an outcry when the true numbers are known in the country. *The Digger's News* has been suppressed the last few days. I expect they have been publishing too much of the truth.

DIARY.—*Chieveley, 31st January.* The reports

¹ Another letter adds, of the Boers, that "their clothes are rather ragged, and I think they will feel the winter when it comes on, unless they are provided with new kit."

concerning General Buller were true in fact,¹ but his position is not nearly as bad as at first appeared. He remains close by the Tugela, preparing for another attack. The Lancashire Fusiliers lost very heavily. Seventeen officers are said to have been killed or wounded.

DIARY.—*Chieveley, 4th February.* Buller's attack has not come off yet. We heard heavy firing yesterday in the direction of Ladysmith. A good many runners have come through from there in the last few days. C company has gone up to Chieveley station, and have a very comfortable camp there. A 4.7-inch gun has been brought up here, mounted on a railway truck. Yesterday they Feb. 3, 1900. experimented firing at right angles from the truck. About 4 A.M this morning they fired two shots at a Boer camp situated some distance behind Fort Wylie.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 4th February.* Duties come pretty heavy, as we have to find $2\frac{1}{4}$

¹ A letter, dated 1st February, says: "The troops seem to have behaved magnificently, but it was found impossible to hold Spion Kop after it had been captured as it was too steep to permit of artillery being taken up, so it was evacuated during the night."

companies per night for piquet, and we have only seven companies, as one is up at Chieveley station, so that we have to sleep out every third night. I don't mind it a bit as long as it is fine; but there is a storm most nights. The men get wet through and have no change of clothing to put on when they get back to camp. However, I believe the Boers are very much worse off, and their clothes are chiefly in rags. Some nights are quite cold now. Later in the year the temperature often goes as low as 20° in the night, and up to 80° in the day-time. The climate, however, is very healthy, though a good many fellows are queer inside just now. I think that is chiefly owing to our long stay in one camp.

LETTER.—*Chieveley Camp, 4th February.* I think I have read more novels in the last three months than in the previous three years. The weather is still very changeable. Some nights are quite cold, and the days are getting decidedly cooler. Later on, we shall get frosts at night, and I think piquet duty will be a doubtful pleasure then. From all accounts, General Buller is in very good spirits, and seems confident of success. I hope he knows more than we do. He has a very strong force of artillery now,—74 guns, I believe. We have not had any demonstrations lately, but the naval guns go out every day and shell the enemy's trenches. I don't think they do much harm, though they must cause a feeling of insecurity and dis-

comfort. They say that they generally get a supply of fish whenever our shells pitch in the river. I suppose the concussion kills them.

DIARY.—*Tuesday, 6th February.* Sunday, as Feb. 4, 1900. usual, was a quiet day. I went on piquet at night. A party of Boers was reported to be east of us, and the General got it into his head that we were going to be attacked, so about 10 P.M. the piquets were doubled, and we had to keep well on the look-out all night. A demonstration was ordered for the next day, so I returned to camp about 4 A.M., Feb. 5, 1900. leaving Bayly in charge of the piquet. We had breakfast at 4.30 A.M., but did not fall in till 7.45. From about 5 A.M. onwards, we heard Buller's guns firing, and we had been told that he intended to attack. We marched down to the forward gun position, now called Shooter's Hill, halted for awhile, and then advanced to within 1900 yards of the river without being fired at, arriving there at 12 o'clock. We had two field guns of the 66th Battery under Hawkes with us. They opened fire on the trenches. The enemy replied with rifle fire from the banks of the river, but it was impossible to see exactly where from. The bullets came

whistling just over our heads. They had the range fairly accurately, but there were only a small number of the enemy firing, and no damage was done. There were a number of horses on the river bank, but the Colonel would not let us fire at them. During the afternoon our cavalry scouts on the left reported that a party of Boers had crept into some kraals our side of the river. The guns retired over the brow of the hill, worked along to the left, and opened fire on the kraals. I brought the maxim into action, at about 1300 yards, on a kraal, keeping under cover as much as possible. But I was seen, and before I got into action, several bullets came over our heads, and some fell within a few yards of the gun. We could not see our bullets strike, so I cannot tell whether we did any good. We had a good many men on the hill, and bullets fell pretty close to us, so we were very lucky not to have any men hit. Two of the Rifle battalion were wounded. It is rather a one-sided game when one is in the open oneself and cannot see a single man of the enemy to fire at. Of course, one can tell roughly, by the crack of the rifle, where they are firing from ; but a good deal has to be guess-work.

I got nothing to eat until we got in just before 6 P.M., and as I had very little sleep the night before, I was fairly tired. I had been galloping for the Colonel most of the day. The "Zebra" is a very handy pony for this sort of work, as I can jump off his back, throw the reins over his head, and leave him without any one to look after him. He will stand like this quite close to the guns while they are firing. Buller's guns are firing heavily this morning, and Feb. 6, 1900. we have orders to be ready to turn out for another demonstration if ordered.

DIARY.—*Wednesday, 7th February.* We left camp yesterday about 11 A.M., as soon as the two guns—66th Battery, and two sections Mounted Infantry—arrived from Frere. One naval 12-pounder was on Shooter's Hill; one 12-pounder and the Royal Artillery went forward, left of the railway; while the 4.7-inch went along the line on its truck, drawn by the armoured engine. I was on the right of the line with two of our companies. The 4.7-inch gun went about 1500 yards beyond Shooter's Hill. They went very slowly, each culvert being carefully examined before they passed over it. Suddenly there was a shot from Piquet

Hill, beyond Colenso, and a shell pitched and burst about 80 yards short of the gun. They immediately retired, the engine puffing away for all it was worth, as they were a splendid target for the enemy's guns. Several more shells were fired before it got out of range, but luckily it was not hit. If it had been knocked off the line, we might have had a difficult job to get it home again. Two of the enemy's guns fired, for the first time since 15th December; one was a 4.7-inch gun, the other a 3-inch. I saw the shells fired by each. Our guns devoted themselves to those of the enemy, and I think they put the big one out of action, for they dropped a number of shells just where it fired from, and it did not fire again. Major Cooper, commanding 7th Fusiliers, was hit in the middle by a spent shrapnel bullet. It doubled him up for a moment, but did no harm. We got back to camp about 6 o'clock without any casualties. At 8 o'clock we heard guns in the distance, and, rather later, I distinctly heard a quick firer, so I conclude that Buller was making a night attack.

Feb. 7, 1900. This morning there is again a very heavy cannonade, and from the sound of the guns it

appears that some progress has been made since yesterday.

LETTER. — *Chieveley Camp, Thursday, 8th February.* Just a line to tell you how things have been going since Sunday. We have heard tremendous cannonades every morning from Buller, but I fear that, as yet, he has not made a great deal of progress. The Boers have a big 6-inch gun throwing 100-lb. shells on the high hills on the opposite side of the river from us, and yesterday we could see it firing at intervals all through the day, and the shells from Buller's guns bursting near it. However, it was not put out of action. We have been demonstrating each day, with a view to keeping as many of the enemy here as possible. As far as I have seen, gun fire is not nearly so destructive as rifle fire, though perhaps the moral effect is greater. I am on piquet to-day, and Feb. 8, 1900. Bayly has just come to relieve me for an hour, while I go and have a wash, so I will stop.

DIARY.—*Friday, 9th February.* Last night we heard that Buller, though he has been so far quite successful, had retired. Presumably he has found out that he cannot possibly get through that way. But at present we have very little news. He seems to have taken several positions with small

loss, but the enemy's guns, if he went further on, would bring a cross and enfilade fire on to him. Their main position is practically in the shape of an amphitheatre, on both wings of which they have mounted big guns. We are all wondering what the next move will be.

Feb. 9, 1900. DIARY.—*Saturday, 10th February.* Bethune's Horse arrived here from Spearman's last night, and
Feb. 10, 1900. General Buller rode into camp this morning. He is taking up his quarters at Chieveley, and A Company have gone there as his guard. Our Brigade is to be re-united, but we know nothing further. A man in D Company was drowned last night, while bathing. It has been very hot the last few days—quite trying—and to-day there is rather a hot wind. No guns have been heard this morning. The enemy are reported to be collecting eastward, and have been busy digging trenches.

Feb. 11, 1900. LETTER. — *Chieveley Camp, Sunday, 11th February.* I am on piquet to-day, so will take the opportunity of starting my letter to you. I expect you will have read with some surprise of Buller's retirement, after what appeared to be three days' successful fighting. Of course, it is very much

criticised out here. Men who have been over to Spearman's camp from here are confident that he was right, and think that a further advance would have led to disaster. I believe that those who were actually engaged are absolutely disgusted. Why he could not realise what the situation would be earlier, I do not know. I am sure it is a bad thing for men to see the result of their fighting thrown away, as has been the case in several instances lately; and it is most dispiriting for them to have to retire from positions which they have won with loss of some of their comrades.

LETTER. — *Chieveley Camp, 11th February.* Yesterday, General Buller came into camp here, and has taken up his residence at Chieveley station. At this moment (9 A.M.) we can see all the troops on the hills near, marching towards us. I believe he has entirely abandoned the positions he held westward, and we expect to have another Battle of Colenso very shortly, in which I think we are sure to take a prominent part, as our Brigade is still up to full strength. I am afraid that many will have lost their confidence in Buller. I think his tactics so far have been too simple and evident for the wily Boer, and also too slow. When he moved westward he certainly anticipated the enemy in the occupation of a very strong position—Spearman's Camp—on this side of the river. But afterwards he delayed two days while his waggons were

coming up, which was not necessary, though of course it added to the comfort of his troops, and so gave the enemy time to bring up heavy guns and strengthen their positions. There are many rumours relating to the heavy losses of the enemy, and to their actually beginning to retreat at one time. But they must all be taken *cum grano*, and it is impossible to say which are true and which false. I, with my usual good health, which I am most thankful for, have not had five minutes' sickness since I left England. It has been exceedingly hot the last week, and rather trying. The flies, too, are very irritating. I have just been across to the railway, close by, to see some of the Artillery march into camp. I passed General Buller on the way. He does not look very cheerful.

DIARY.—*Chieveley, Tuesday, 13th February.*

On Sunday, General Buller's army began to arrive back here.¹ In the evening we had orders to pack up in the morning and be ready to move; a very welcome order, after being two months in this camp! On Monday we left camp at 7.30, and the force assembled on Gun Hill. It consisted of one battery South African Light Horse, the Carabiniers, and Royal Welch Fusiliers. The

Feb. 12. 1900.

¹ A letter adds: "And the neighbourhood is now dotted with camps along a front of about five miles."

idea was to occupy Hussar Hill, fortify and hold it. The South African Light Horse occupied the hill without opposition, but were fired on as they descended the slope on the far side. We marched on to the hill, which certainly did not look a nice place to hold, as it is commanded by hills held by the Boers, and the crest of the hill is under rifle fire from their trenches. As soon as Buller came, he saw it was no good, and ordered us to march back to camp. The Boers followed up the South African Light Horse as they retired, and fired heavily at them, though only at long range. A few rounds from our guns soon silenced them, but the South African Light Horse had four men hit. When we got back to camp, about 4.30, after a trying day, as it was very hot, we found our old camping ground occupied by the Irish Fusiliers, so we had to pitch our tents elsewhere. To-night we again have orders to be ready to move Feb. 13, 1900. early to-morrow. It is, we believe, the beginning of a general move, though we do not know where we are going to.

LETTER.—*Hlangwani Hill, 21st February*

(*written in pencil*).¹ Only just a line by this mail, as we are bivouacking, and it is nearly dark. We left Chieveley on Wednesday (14th), and have been fighting more or less every day. I have had two pretty warm days with the maxim, but without hurt. We have not had our clothes off, or a wash of any sort since this day week ago, eight days. To-day we have occupied Colenso, having thrown a pontoon bridge over the river, about two miles below the village. I will give you an account of everything next mail if possible.

LETTER. — *Horseshoe Hill, Colenso, 26th February (written in pencil)*. I will try and give you a short account of our doings since Feb. 14, 1900. we left Chieveley on Wednesday, 14th inst. We marched that day to Hussar Hill, about 3 miles from camp. Our Mounted Infantry occupied it just before the enemy, which was lucky, as otherwise we should have had a fight for it. As it was, a certain number of the enemy hid themselves in the dongas, and fired at us at short range.² I had rather a warm time with the maxim gun, and came under rifle and shell fire. We

¹ Another letter, written in pencil, on the same date, from Hlangwani Hill, says: "We are getting on well, and have every hope of relieving Ladysmith by the end of the week. We surprised and outflanked the enemy, so the fighting has not been at all severe."

² The Diary says: "They were also supported by a gun on Hlangwani Hill, which opened fire on our Field Battery."

gradually drove the enemy out of the valleys, and occupied the whole hill.¹ We had six men wounded. Our force on Hussar Hill consisted of the Fusilier Brigade and Talbot Coke's Brigade; General Lyttelton's Division was in the valley to our right; and General Warren's Division on our right rear. We bivouacked on the hill.² On Thursday our Division did not do much except Feb. 15, 1900. occupy a long ridge which runs from Hussar Hill. General Lyttelton's Division worked round a bit on our right. We again bivouacked on Hussar Hill. Friday, too, was more or less a quiet day, Feb. 16, 1900. though in the morning we came under rather a heavy shell fire for a short time. I was sitting under a tree with Hurt, and one of the enemy's guns was trying to find the limbers of a field battery of ours. Their shells were coming close over our heads, and pitching about 100 yards beyond us, getting a little shorter each time. Luckily, we advanced just then, for before we had gone 50 yards, a shell burst almost under our tree. I went back later in the day, and picked up a bit of the shell. We bivouacked that night on the ridge.³ The following morning we started at 5.30, Feb. 17, 1900.

¹ The Diary says: "We were badly off for water, and I had to take my mules nearly 4 miles back in the dark before I could find a proper supply."

² The Diary adds: "During the day several naval guns and the two 5-inch guns had come up."

³ The Diary says: "On Friday morning our big guns and field artillery commenced to shell Green Hill, and two guns of the enemy's

and marched about 2 miles without opposition down to the Gomba stream. We were very glad to get to water again, for we had been very hard up for it the few days before. Each battalion has a water-cart, but it only fills the water-bottles of half the battalion, and from Hussar Hill it had to go back to Chieveley to refill. We occupied a few kopjes on the far side of the stream, which brought us within range of a very steep hill called Green Hill, which our guns had bombarded heavily the day before. We were sniped at all day, and lost one man killed and six wounded. A bullet crossed me just about a foot away, as I was walking along, and struck the ground a few yards to my left.¹ Nearly every one gets shaves like this. We bivouacked that night behind the Gomba, our outposts holding the line of the stream. Lyttelton's Division meanwhile had advanced on our right, and occupied a high hill called Cingolo.² It was splendid to see their lights high up on the hill.

replied. We were lying on the ridge to the right all day, and in the evening we bivouacked on the hill,—at the end of it. Lyttelton's Division had moved forward the last two days, and was somewhat to our right front."

¹ Another letter, dated 5th March, from Colenso station, says: "A bullet came very close to my leg as I was walking along. It came through a small bush just on my right, and struck the ground a few feet to my left."

² The Diary says: "Lyttelton made good progress during the day, and the Queen's in the evening had reached the crest of Cingolo, a very high hill joined by a neck to Monte Christo."

DIARY.—On Sunday, we held the same Feb. 18, 1900. positions as the day before, while Lyttelton's Division advanced along the south-west slope of Cingolo, and across the neck. About 1 P.M. we saw the line of our infantry come over the crest of Monte Christo, where they came under shell fire from two Boer guns, placed apparently on Green Hill. Our brigade then formed for attack, changing direction, and advanced on Green Hill, which proved a stiff climb for a short distance. The enemy evacuated it as we advanced, and we reached the crest without the loss of a man. A few shells fired at us on the crest did no harm. I had to take the maxim gun about two miles round. The Boers had left their tents standing, and a variety of articles in them, such as coats, rugs, saddles, etc.¹ The place had been strongly entrenched. The effect of the lyddite shells could be clearly seen; where they had struck on rock, huge holes were dug and large stones thrown up. A gun of the Hlangwani ridge fired a few shells at us in the evening. The next morning we started about 9 A.M., marched Feb. 19, 1900.

¹ The letter, dated 5th March, adds: "And thousands of rounds of ammunition." It also says: "Buller would not push on, and we bivouacked on the ground we had won."

through another Boer camp, and then occupied Hlangwani. This also had been evacuated, and it seemed curious—for we were in the front line—that we should march without difficulty on to Hlangwani, which we have looked at so often and wished to attack during the last two months. A few snipers remained hidden on the Hlangwani ridge all day, and a gun from Colenso kept up a pretty constant fire. But we had good cover behind large rocks and suffered no loss. I nearly had my two mules killed. They were tied up under a tree while I had the maxim in action, assisting the 7th Fusiliers on the right flank.¹ Thinking it was not a very safe place for them, I ordered them to be moved. Two minutes later two shells in rapid succession fell immediately under the tree to which the mules had been tied. The 7th had one officer killed (Thorburn), one officer

¹ A letter says: "I was pretty hotly engaged with the maxim in the afternoon. I got into a grand position with an enormous rock on my left, which completely protected me from the shell fire from Colenso. Several shells passed between me and a small bush, about 12 yards from me, but they could not touch me. A captain in the 7th was killed, with whom I had just shared my lunch. I could not rejoin my regiment in the evening, as they were in very rocky ground. My men lit a fire to cook some dinner at, but the bullets soon began to whistle round it, so we had to put it out again."

and several men wounded. There was not much advance made on the right during the day, but big guns were being moved forward and taking up positions on Monte Christo slope. General Buller's intention appeared to be to gain the end of Monte Christo ridge, cross the river in that direction, and so attack the Boers' left flank. From the end of the ridge he could have commanded the ground as far as Umbulwana, though it would have first been necessary to clear the heights on the opposite bank of the river—Railway and Pieter's Hills.

LETTER. — *Pietermaritzburg, 7th March.* The Feb. 20 1900. next day, too, was spent on Hlangwani in the old Boer camp. Our men found sacks of flour and cooking pots, and were completely happy looting and cooking themselves chupatties. We were shelled at intervals during the day, but I don't think any damage was done. A pontoon bridge was thrown across the river during the morning, and in the afternoon a good many troops crossed and occupied Colenso and some of the kopjes round. The Somersets went further than they were intended to, got somewhat entangled, and had a good many casualties. In the afternoon the enemy shelled the pontoon bridge. Several went close, but it was not hit.¹ We moved down into the valley

¹ The Diary, written upon 14th March, and the letter written from

- Feb. 21, 1900. the next day, but did not cross over the river. On
Feb. 22, 1900. Thursday there was an attack made on some small
kopjes, and I was supporting it from our side of the
river with the maxim gun. Our big guns and
wagons had been crossing over the pontoon all day,
and the enemy attempted to shell them, but with-
out doing much harm beyond killing one or two
Feb. 23, 1900. oxen.¹ On Friday² General Hart's Brigade
attacked a high hill, the name of which I do not
know.³ I was again out with the maxim gun, but
left the fight about 5.30, as our Brigade was ordered
to cross the river. When I left they had got on
fairly well, without losing many men, but in the
end the attack failed. They worked their way up
to the shoulder of the hill, then charged over the
crest up to what they imagined to be the top of the
hill. Unluckily, there was still higher ground, en-
trenched and held in force by the enemy, about 150
yards further on. The top of the hill is very rocky,
and our men were done, and could not charge
further. The enemy poured a tremendous fire on

Horseshoe Hill on 26th February, both say the pontoon bridge was
thrown over the river on 21st February, not on the 20th, as stated in this
letter. There is evidently an immaterial mixing of dates.

¹ The Diary adds : "After dusk there was heavy firing and sniping
all night."

² A letter says : "We had a bathe in the morning in the river, which
was delicious, for it was the first time we had had our clothes off since
leaving Chieveley." (They left Chieveley on 14th February.)

³ The Diary, which was written up later, says it was Railway Hill.
The attack was made in the afternoon, so the 5.30 mentioned is 5.30 P.M.

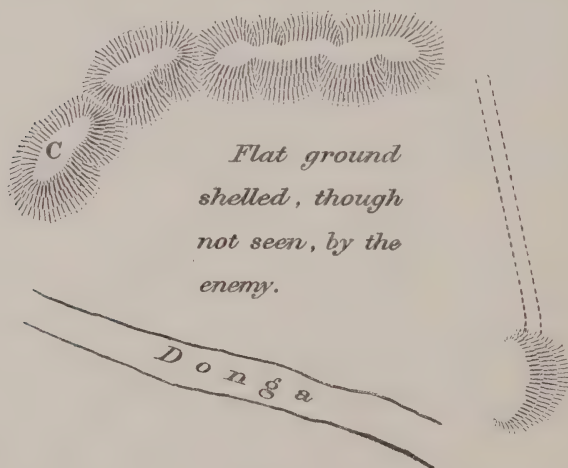
to them, and they were compelled to retire. The casualties, I believe, amounted to about 500.

LETTER. — *Horseshoe Hill, 26th February.* While I was away, the regiment was moved across the river, and when I got back to camp I had no idea where they had gone to. It was then dark, but I crossed the river, and found out the direction they had gone in. After a while I got completely blocked among wagons, and found the Rifle Brigade maxim officer in the same fix. Presently the 7th Fusilier gun turned up. Their officer, luckily, had a tinned tongue, and I had a tin of cocoa, so we had a good dinner, and slept together in a very smelly ditch.¹ There was sniping going on all night, and many of the bullets passed very close over us. I must say the firing at night is very unpleasant, and disturbs one's slumbers considerably.

DIARY.—Next morning I found the regiment Feb. 24, 1900. about a mile away, holding a horse-shoe hill, with the 7th, just beyond the Onderbrook Spruit. There was a nasty rifle fire enfilading the hill, so I left the maxim gun in a donga, and went up the hill to see the Colonel. We had two men hit, while

¹ The Diary says: "In a ditch, in the middle of a mass of transport, —a smelly spot too, for the Boers had been camping here for months, and there was a dead horse in the decaying stage in unpleasant proximity."

taking up the position for the night before, and a bullet had gone through the Colonel's breeches. During the night our men had built up traverses and stone walls for cover, but several had been wounded when I arrived. I sat with the Colonel in his shelter for some time.¹ Stebbing was hit with a maxim shell, and the poor fellow died in great pain before he reached the hospital. The shape of our hill was as below :—



¹ A letter says : "The fire of the enemy was pretty hot—rifle fire, big-gun fire, and their beastly little quick-firing gun, nicknamed Pom-pom or "Buck-up."

The General came up during the morning, and, as he wished the maxim gun to be brought into action, I brought it up from the road across the flat ground to the left of hill C. While I was away the Colonel was hit, also by a maxim shell, and never recovered consciousness. It was a sad loss to the regiment, who thoroughly appreciated one of the best colonels that has ever commanded a regiment. I came into action on the left of hill C, at trenches not more than 600 yards away, while several snipers were concealed at closer range. They were not long in seeing the clumsy carriage with which we are provided, and which is very ill adapted for work behind a parapet. The bullets began to come quick, and several hit the gun. One man had been hit through the head before we got the gun into position; Corporal Roberts, working the gun with me, was shot through the arm; and my helmet was knocked half off my head by a bullet. Two more hit the right-hand box while I was freeing the belt which stuck for a moment. Eventually the gun was seriously damaged by the foresight being shot away. After that I sat behind

the parapet close by the gun and only fired it at intervals.¹

LETTER.—Another officer was wounded in the afternoon. Our total casualties during the day were two officers and three men killed, one officer and twenty-seven men wounded. The 7th Fusiliers did not lose quite so heavily. During the night every one built up their stone walls so as to afford better protection.

LETTER.—*Horseshoe Hill, 26th February.*²

¹ Another account is given in a letter as follows: "Meanwhile the enemy were shelling the flat ground at the foot of the ridge, thinking that our reserves would be there. I brought my gun safely from the road to hill C, not altogether a pleasant job! I started to get my gun into action, and received a very warm welcome from the enemy, some of whom were hidden only 500 yards from our trenches. I had one man shot through the head as I was running the gun up. As soon as I started firing, the bullets fairly peppered round us. Several hit the gun. Then I got one through my helmet. Number 2, working the gun with me—my corporal—was shot through the arm. As I was re-adjusting a belt a bullet grazed the side of the box and passed between my head and shoulder; and another went clean through the corner of the box. The foresight was shot away. Several bullets went through the spokes of the wheels. In fact, the gun was hit all over, and I could count between twenty and thirty bullet marks on it. Certainly my luck was in that day, for, though I was working it, and firing myself, I never got touched." (As a matter of fact, fifty bullet marks were eventually counted on the gun and gun-carriage.)

² This long letter, extracts from which have been given, and which is all written in pencil, was evidently written behind a stone wall on 26th February, while the Boers were firing on our force on Horseshoe Hill.

Yesterday (Sunday) there was an armistice, and I was away all day trying to get my gun mended. It cannot be done here, so I wired to Maritzburg for a new one. During the night there was again heavy rifle fire, and to-day we are having a very unpleasant time. Bullets and shells are flying all over the place. I think my corner is pretty safe, but three shells have burst within 30 yards of us this morning. They make a horrid noise, and throw the stones about, as our hill is very rocky. I am afraid this is a very dull account, but I am in such a beastly state of filth that I do not feel inclined for any of the occupations of civilized life. A parcel arrived from you this morning, and in it what I wanted beyond anything else—a flannel shirt. I have put it on, and feel far more comfortable, and very grateful. The soles of my boots are coming off, and my coat is almost in rags, but I have sent my servant back to Chieveley to-day on my pony to fetch me some more kit. We really have had a very hard time lately—meals just when you can get them—no fresh meat or vegetables. Great-coats were carried on wagons, but we have not seen them for some days, during which time there has been a good deal of rain. No one complains at all, except at the delay in pushing on.

LETTER. — *Pietermaritzburg, 7th March.* On Tuesday there was very successful work done about 2 miles to our right. Barton, with the other two

regiments of his Brigade, and a borrowed regiment, took Pieter's Hill, and a long ridge further on; while the hill which Hart's Brigade had failed to take a few days before, was attacked and captured. The enemy's flank was now turned, and, during the night, they retired from the trenches in our front. I went and had a look at their stone walls and trenches, which were only about 500 yards from ours. There were thousands of rounds of sporting, split, and soft-nosed cartridges left there. On Feb. 28, 1900. Wednesday morning we left our hill without a regret, and joined Barton on Pieter's Hill, where we bivouacked. The way to Ladysmith was now open, and a troop of Colonial Cavalry marched into Ladysmith in the evening.

March 1,
1900.

LETTER.—*Pietermaritzburg, 6th March.* The following day we marched about 3 miles forward, and bivouacked close to the Klip River. The enemy were in full retreat, and, as far as we can hear, quite disorganised. Yet General Buller would not pursue them, but kept a whole Brigade of Cavalry, a Brigade of Mounted Infantry, a Horse Artillery battery, and goodness knows how many field batteries idle all day. I believe General White sent out some of his batteries with their emaciated horses to pursue, but I am told that they could not pull the guns up the hills. In the afternoon I walked up Umbulwana—a stiffish climb—and saw the epaulement over which Long Tom had

fired. They had got the gun away, but left a lot of ammunition behind. As usual, they had left a number of tents behind them, and sacks of flour and other eatables. I was quite done when I got back to camp. I don't think sleeping out wet nights, and living almost entirely on "bully beef" and biscuits, keeps one very fit. Next day I had a grand wash and bathe in the Klip River, and in the afternoon rode into Ladysmith. The men in Ladysmith do not look very haggard, or starved, but they are white and thin, and one or two officers who have been through the siege tell me they are very weak. I rode home through Intombi Camp—the hospital—and that is a most piteous sight, they all look so bad.¹ On Saturday our brigade with several others marched in procession through Ladysmith. I was not there, as I had charge of the Brigade transport that day. Thank goodness, I am not a transport officer! My language and temper by the time I came home would be unbearable. I found my Brigade in the evening about 3 miles north of Ladysmith, where we bivouacked. The next morning an officer was ordered to take a party to Pietermaritzburg for clothing. I asked to go, and started off at 4 P.M. to march to Colenso with

March 2,
1900.

March 3,
1900.

March 4,
1900.

¹ The same letter says: "I travelled down last night"—5th March—"with a sick officer, and he told me that the only nourishment obtainable for men with dysentery, etc., or those who had legs or arms amputated, was about $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of milk a day, and, just occasionally, some beef-tea. The number of deaths in consequence has been very large."

March 5,
1900.

seventeen men and a broken cart, which was to be exchanged. I got the men across the drift in the Klip by making the cart make several journeys. The Royal Fusilier party were with us too. We marched till nearly 8 o'clock, and then bivouacked about a quarter of a mile from another drift which had to be crossed. The next morning we started at 5 A.M., crossed the drift, marched through the most filthy smells caused by dead horses along the road, through swarms of flies which drove my pony nearly mad, and arrived at Colenso station less than ten minutes after the morning train had left at 9.30. A.M. The next train was due to leave at 7.30. P.M., so we had to spend the day there. I went to see our Colonel's grave, which is near the place where we lost our guns on 15th December.

March 6,
1900.

I got here at 3.30. A.M. this morning, was met at the station by Best, who is Dépôt officer at present, and have started my job on the men's kits. I wonder what people are thinking of Buller. I expect he will get a good deal more "kudos" than he deserves. He certainly is not popular in military circles here, and many think that it is in spite of him, rather than through him, that we have relieved Ladysmith. He seems to have had two good opportunities of squashing the enemy, neither of which he would take. If, after we took Monte Christo, he had brought his big guns to the end of the ridge, he would have commanded the Boer camps. Instead of which he took them all over

the river on our left flank, near Colenso, and two days later moved them back again. The second opportunity was of course when the Boers were in retreat and he would not pursue. His one idea seems to have been to get the Boers away with as little fighting as possible; and so, when he found them trekking of their own accord, he let them go unmolested. I hear that we are to be put into a Division with Hart's Irish Brigade, and to be under General Hunter. We shall not, I think, go to Cape Colony.

LETTER.—*Pietermaritzburg, 9th March.* We had a hard fortnight's work relieving Ladysmith, and the total casualties are said to be 110 officers and about 1500 men. We had our Colonel and another officer killed, and one wounded, and about four men killed and fifty wounded. We had good news of Roberts again yesterday. I hope these successes may soon bring the war to an end. I have been down in Maritzburg for the last few days getting fresh kit for the men. I was very glad of the change and return to civilization, for we have had rather a rough time ever since we have been out here, and especially the last three weeks. I have been very fit through it all.

LETTER.—*Pietermaritzburg, 10th March.* I have had rather a nice time down here, and have an easy day-to-day. I was going by the mail last night, I March 10,
1900.

but there was not room for my men in the train, so I am waiting till to-night. Our Brigade is now going to join Sir Archibald Hunter's Division, but I doubt whether we shall have much more fighting. We have not had a very lively time on the whole, and I shall not be sorry when the war comes to an end. If we go on as we are now, I think another two months will finish it. Maritzburg is full of sick and wounded. Some of the churches have been turned into hospitals.

March 12,
1900.

LETTER.—*Modder Spruit, Ladysmith, 14th March.* I rejoined my regiment on Sunday last, and left again at daybreak on Monday, and marched down to Ladysmith with a party of eleven men on our way to Colenso.¹ Of course, as usual, not knowing the time for the trains, we were a quarter of an hour too late, and had to wait $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours till 3.30 P.M. We got to Colenso at 5. We then had to carry the luggage I had brought from Maritzburg about half a mile across the river, as the Boers broke down the railway bridge, and the temporary one is not yet finished. I could not get back that night, so I went and dined, slept and breakfasted with the Dublin Fusiliers, who are stationed there. I got back by a 9 A.M. train on Tuesday morning, and was lucky enough to find a construction train going on down the Newcastle line, which landed

March 13,
1900.

¹ Apparently a fatigue party to bring on the baggage from Pietermaritzburg which was left near Colenso

us within half a mile of our new camp ;¹ for the regiment had moved on Monday. We are now about 7 miles along the Newcastle line, north of Ladysmith. The Boers, when leaving, broke down every bridge and culvert on the line, so the railway authorities have a very big job before them. They have now given me a tripod mounting for my maxim gun. It is very much more convenient, but affords scarcely any protection ; so I hope I shall not have to come into action at 500 yards again. Every one here is mad with Buller for not having followed up the enemy when they retreated, for they were utterly demoralised, and, I think, an immense amount of damage might have been inflicted on them. "Bobs," Lyttelton, French, and Baden-Powell have come out best, so far. Several Generals have lost their reputations, but few, I am sorry to say, have come forward. This war is, however, a valuable experience to every one. We are having hot weather again, and the flies are very troublesome, as the Boers have had big camps close to where we are.² If you want to get a good

¹ Another letter of the same date, from Modder Spruit, says : "I had rather an amusing journey from Colenso yesterday, my companions being a doctor, a railway engineer, a gentleman trooper in a Colonial corps, and a Johannesburger. The doctor had been taken prisoner, been to Pretoria, and eventually been put over the Portuguese border. He was very conversational, and had several interesting photographs—some of dead Boers. They all talked a good deal, and were amusing."

² Another letter adds : "They always leave a variety of things behind them, and we have got hold of a couple of big tables, which are convenient in our mess."

book on the Transvaal, read "The Transvaal from Within," by Fitzpatrick. It is quite reliable, though scarcely impartial. This is written with an indelible pencil, so will, I think, remain legible.

LETTER. — *Modder Spruit, Ladysmith, 14th March 1900.* I feel much fitter after the change I have had, and am ready to pursue the wily Boer again. They are holding positions in the Biggersberg Mountains, and I expect we shall move against them before long. I wish we had more confidence in Buller. My pony is well, but this is a very bad time of the year for them, and they are terribly lazy.

LETTER.—*Near Ladysmith, Monday, 19th March (written in pencil).* Since last writing to you I have received three parcels, one containing shirts and socks for the men, and the others, raisins, nibs, shirt, suit of pyjamas, and all kinds of little things—all very useful. I have now such a supply of things that I cannot carry any more, and have had to give a great many clothes away; and, as everybody else is in much the same state, do not send me any more parcels just yet. You know that I am most grateful for your kindness in sending me parcels each week. This sounds rather foolish, doesn't it? Well, I feel so too, for I am in hospital with an attack of fever. On Friday I felt good for little, and worse on

16th March
1900,

Saturday, so in the evening I saw our doctor, who sent me to bed. The next morning, feeling very much better, I got up and stood in the doorway of my tent, but immediately collapsed backwards on to my bed. My temperature was still high, so I was despatched about 9.30 to the 5th Brigade Field Hospital, I should think 8 miles away. And what a jolly journey it was! One of our men, who was sick, came in my ambulance wagon, which is a canvas-covered wagon, without springs, drawn by ten mules. It would be impossible to have springs, for they would soon be broken on these roads. Kington and Powell rode down to see that I got comfortably settled in, and I was very glad they had done so, for there was considerable difficulty in finding room. We did not reach our destination till two o'clock. My temperature had gone up with the journey, and was 104.8° , and they have not been able to get it down much yet. We have got to move again this afternoon, but only about three miles. They are moving the whole hospital. The bad cases will be carried all the way on stretchers. Excuse such a scrawl, but the doctor won't let me sit up. I hope I shall get all right again, and get back to the regiment.

March 18,
1900.

LETTER.—*Near Ladysmith, 21st March (written in pencil).* Just a line only, and that rather a scrawl under difficulties, as I am in hospital, and

not allowed to sit up. I first felt bad on Thursday, and on Saturday evening found I could not go on any longer. So I went to the doctor, who took my temperature, found it 103.8° , and so bundled me off to bed. The next morning I felt ever so much better, and stood up in the doorway of my tent for a moment, and then collapsed in a faint back on to my bed. They sent me that morning down to the Field Hospital, about 10 miles, or less. There were several other patients going as well. We travelled in the service ambulance wagon. The jolting in the carts was simply awful. We took $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The result of the journey was to send my temperature to 104.8° , at which it remained, in spite of being sponged all over, till the next night. Since then it has gradually fallen. Yesterday morning it was 101.2° . I had a good tent to myself here. To-day we go by hand and train to Daly's Hospital, a permanent one, just gone up close to where my regiment is. When next I write I will give you an account of the hospitals if I find I know anything about them.

LETTER.—*Hospital, 21st March (written in pencil).* Last night my temperature was not more than 101° , and I feel much better, though, of course, very weak. I had an injection of morphia last night to take away the ache in the back and make me sleep. How heavenly! To-day I move by hand (*i.e.* stretcher) and train back close to where

March 20,
1900.

March 21,
1900.

I came from, to Daly's Hospital—a stationary one, where I hope to see fresh milk and a bed. Tinned-milk diet is horrid.

THIS ends the Letters and Diary of George Salt, and the remainder must be told by two out of many letters addressed to his father, and written by another officer of the Welch Fusiliers.

LETTER.—*Modder Spruit Camp, near Ladysmith, 28th March 1900.* I am sorry to say that your son has got enteric fever. It is, however, fortunately only a slight attack, and he is doing as well as possible under the circumstances. They have brought him to No. 1 Base Hospital, which is near here. There he is well looked after, and has a bed with spring mattress, and plenty of milk and ice and things of that sort. Major Mills, our doctor, says that he seems to have only a slight attack, and is going on well, though, of course, it will be some time before he can get about again. We have not telegraphed to you, as there is no cause for alarm, and it was thought you would only be given needless anxiety on his behalf.

LETTER.—*Modder Spruit Camp, near Ladysmith, 3rd April 1900.* Long before you get this letter you will have heard of the sad death of your son. When I wrote last week he seemed to be

doing so well, and only to have a mild attack, but that evening we were told he was much worse. He became delirious, and never really regained consciousness. From time to time he seemed to be a little better, and all hoped that, with his excellent constitution, he would pull through. Last night, however, he quite suddenly became very much worse, and Major Daly came over about 8 o'clock to say that he was afraid there was no hope. Kington, Hurt, and I therefore went over to the hospital to see him, and to find out if we could do anything. He was quite unconscious, and did not recognise any one. We stayed for some time, and would have liked to stay till the end, but the doctors did not wish us to do this, as there were four other cases in the same ward, one of which was very serious. The clergyman held a very short service and then we came away. They promised to let us know at once if he showed any sign of regaining consciousness again. Early this morning we went over, hoping against hope, to inquire, and found that he had passed away peacefully and quietly in his sleep at twenty minutes to four this morning. The funeral is to take place this afternoon. He will lie in a corner of the little cemetery, about half a mile from camp. We are going to put a wooden cross for the present, and a low rail round the grave. There is a stone wall running round the ground, so there will be no danger of it being disturbed. I think you will like



Sgt. Peter E.

to know exactly where he lies, so I will try to give you a short description. It is about 7 miles from Ladysmith, east of the Newcastle road, and about 500 yards from it. The railway runs here quite close to the road, and within half a mile is the station made by the Boers when they were here. Pepworth Hill, which is well known and will be marked on all maps, is about two miles nearer Ladysmith on the west side of the road and railway. I think that everything was done that was possible for him. Major Daly, the medical officer in charge, took every possible trouble and care, and was much distressed at being unable to pull him through. I cannot tell you how deeply we all sympathise with you in your great loss. He was beloved by all, officers and men; as for myself, he was one of the best friends I had, and it is hard to realize that he will never come back to us. A kinder, better friend no one ever had; always ready to help any one. Captain Gough has told you how highly he was thought of professionally. I was not at Sniper's Hill myself, but have heard much of the splendid way he fought his maxim till it was disabled. It is so sad that he never heard that General Buller had mentioned his name in his despatches.

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